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# THOUGHTS FOR ALL TIMES

BY THE  
RIGHT REV. MGR. JOHN S. VAUGHAN  
AUTHOR OF "LIFE AFTER DEATH," ETC.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE  
RIGHT REV. J. C. HEDLEY, D.D., O.S.B.  
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*FIRST AMERICAN EDITION*

(From the Fourth English Edition)

WITH A PREFACE BY  
HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL GIBBONS

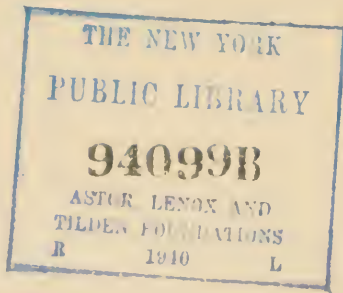
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Nihil Obstat.

GULIELMUS GILDEA, D.D.

Imprimatur.

HERBERTUS CARDINALIS VAUGHAN,  
*Archiepiscopus Westmonasteriensis.*

Imprimatur.

✠ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,  
*Archbishop of New York.*

## PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE human heart is captivated more readily and more effectually by love than by fear. As children that love their parents serve and obey those parents more cheerfully and willingly than children who are actuated merely by fear, so people in general are drawn to the practice of virtue and attracted to the service of God more efficaciously by the power of love than by the principle of fear.

It is true that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," yet it is only the *beginning*; for love is the *completion* of wisdom: "perfect charity casteth out fear, because fear hath pain, and he that feareth is not perfected in charity." 1. John iv. 18.

Many persons find the service of God very hard, and the way of salvation difficult, because they do not love God; and they do not love Him because they do not know Him. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is charity." 1. John iv. 8.

Whoever throws light on this powerful and magnetic principle of love smooths the way of salvation for thousands, and becomes a great benefactor of mankind. This the Right Rev. Monsignor Vaughan has done in his excellent work, "Thoughts for All Times." From this truly valuable book the reader gets a deeper insight into the meaning of the words of the beloved disciple, "Let us love God, because God first hath loved us." 1. John iv. 19.

After giving convincing proofs of the *intensity* of God's love for us, the Right Rev. Author beautifully explains the consoling principle of God's *personal* and *concentrated* love for each one of us *individually*; for St. Paul says: "He hath loved *me*, and delivered Himself for *me*."

We cannot be said to love a person whom we do not know. On the other hand, our love and esteem for a person grows on acquaintance, increasing accordingly as we discover new excellencies in that person.

Our love for God increases in proportion to the growth of our knowledge of God. Monsignor Vaughan is very happy in his

exposition of the attributes of God, giving special prominence to God's goodness and mercy. His beautiful and powerful illustrations remind us of the simple yet forcible parables by which the divine Master so efficaciously detached souls from the fleeting pleasures of this world, and inflamed them with ardent desires of attaining the mansions of their Father's house.

The Right Rev. Author is remarkably ingenious in discovering similitudes between the natural and the supernatural. His mental acquirements are varied as well as profound. Works of this kind, simple, solid, and attractive, are much needed in our day. We wish this most excellent work "God-speed" in its great mission of drawing souls to God. We should be glad to see a copy of it in every household in the land. It needs only to be known to have its merits appreciated. We congratulate the publisher of the American edition, Mr. O'Shea, on his energy and zeal in placing this rich mine of religious thought within the reach of all by publishing it at such unusually low terms.

In "Thoughts for All Times" the student will find a flood of light illuminating the principles of his theology; the priest and the catechist will find new mines of material, rich in illustration; parents will find much needed help in the arduous task of detaching the minds of their children from the things of this earth and directing them towards the affairs of heaven. From this book all will learn more clearly the meaning of the encouraging words of the apostle: "You have not received the spirit of *bondage* again in *fear*; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, (Father)."

JAMES, CARDINAL GIBBONS.

BALTIMORE,

*Feast of the Nativity of the B. V. M., 1899.*



## PREFACE.

THIS is an age when every good and Christian writer who can "get himself read," as Carlyle would say, should print and publish as much as he can. For as evil writings do incalculably more harm than evil speech, so good writings are indefinitely more efficacious than mere spoken addresses. Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., has exhorted us to oppose writing to writing—"scripta scriptis,"—to use the press to fight against the press. It is consoling, therefore, to welcome a new book by a writer who can securely count on a large number of readers.

Every conscientious and capable writer deserves respect and encouragement. There is so much talk in the world, that without the example of those who take pen in hand and put down in order and carefulness what they have vigorously thought out, human speech would before long begin to lose its power of affecting human faculty. There are many, no doubt, who write without publishing. It is to them, especially if they are priests and pastors, that we owe whatever freshness, fulness and stimulating power there is in the sermons of the

present generation. They dig assiduously, and they find treasure. Did they not write, they would be as other men, or preachers—that is to say, empty, dry and childish, turning the hearts of cultivated men and women against the word of God, and making solitudes round about the Christian pulpit. To write, if the writer is honest and conscientious, is far from easy work. It is so much easier to talk—in a way—than to search for ideas, to reject what is too common or too obvious, to work out a view, to stick to the point, and to make one's sentences grammatical and shapely.

It would be a mistake to call these essays of Monsignor Vaughan by the name of sermons. They have neither the sermon form nor the sermon tone. It is true that the greater part of the book deals with religious subjects. It is true, also, that in some places the writer takes the opportunity of enforcing a moral point. But they are essays, not sermons. The difference lies chiefly in the attitude of the author. A sermon supposes a preacher—and a preacher is an official personage, standing in the sanctuary, and clad in ministerial robes. The essayist claims no official position, and speaks as one man to another. His audience is not his flock; but individual men and women, with faculties that can understand, and important interests to think about. There is no reason why

such topics as God and God's love, the Blessed Sacrament, and the Last Things should not be calmly and earnestly discussed, without strong appeals to the feelings, or that assumption of authority which is so useful and so necessary on fitting occasions.

This book contains some twenty papers, most of which have already appeared in print.<sup>1</sup> They are distributed in three divisions and may be said to fall under three heads. First we have five essays on God and the Holy Trinity. The "Love" of God, the "Nature" of God, the "Wisdom" of God, make up three of the titles found in this first part. Without being abstruse or scholastic, the treatment is solid, interesting and suggestive. The two essays on the "Blessed Trinity," first, as Reflected in Man and next as traceable in the Irrational Creature, are good examples of that kind of "apologetic" work which does not pretend to be demonstration, but is valuable as showing how the mind might reasonably expect some such stupendous revelation as the Trinity.

The second division of the book opens with two very interesting disquisitions on the Blessed Sacrament. These are followed by two on the subject of Purgatory—showing the reasonableness of the Catholic doctrine, and the nature of purgato-

<sup>1</sup> In the pages of *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.—J. S. V.

rial suffering. Then we have other two on that Divine quality and stimulus of the soul which are called supernatural grace, and the manner in which, through grace, a human being may be united to God.

The third division is more miscellaneous. In the "Riddle of Human Life" we find a useful exposition of the end and purpose of mortal life. "Dust to Dust" unmistakably indicates a lesson to be learnt from death. "Man a Microcosm" is a study on the difference between man and the beast, leading up to the consideration of those supernatural motives which man has the power to see, if he will. "Pain as a Motive" explains itself. "Heroes: True and False" is an examination of the state of mind which prevents most men from becoming saints. The paper that follows, entitled "The Inconsistency of our Faith and Practice," pursues this subject still further, and insists on the view that what is required is not so much to know more than we do know, but (like a St. Francis Borgia contemplating the dead queen) to realise what we know already. Then follow two useful controversial papers on Protestantism. The last essay in the book is on "Vivisection".

It will be evident from this brief enumeration that the contents of the book here offered to the public are largely theological. This is true. But,

to my mind, nothing is more needed at the present day than to bring theological thought within reach of all who will take an interest in it. It is the fashion in the Protestant countries to pretend to distinguish between theology and religion. There is a distinction, undoubtedly. One is knowledge, the other is spiritual activity. But as spiritual activity is not a mere instinct, like that which makes a bee build its cell, but rests on intelligent spiritual views, you cannot have it without such spiritual views—and these views, which are furnished by the teaching of the Faith, are made large, clear and scientific by theology. For theology is not a mere study. As Lessius so well says in the dedication of his treatise *De Summo Bono*, "Theology should make a man not merely learned, and an able disputant, but wise, holy and detached from all things earthly. No one who dwells assiduously in the contemplation of Divine things can help feeling their influence in his heart." There may be theological writers who make their theology very dry. But the author of this book seems to have hit what Lessius calls the happy medium—*inter scholasticum et asceticum*—between science and spiritual reading, which is calculated to make every one who reads his pages a better man in proportion to the growth and development of his knowledge.



Knowledge of this kind, whether we call it theology or not, is absolutely essential, not only for priests, but for every one who pretends to read and reflect. When we think of it, there are very few books in the English tongue which treat theological subjects in a fashion suitable for the general reader, and at the same time solidly and with authority. Of non-Catholic theological writings there is an enormous and increasing abundance. Of such theology as they have, Anglicans and Dissenters certainly make the most. We have dissertations on God, on the Fall, on Grace, Sin, Reconciliation, Heaven, Hell, and a hundred other topics. The theology of these books is naturally of every shade of orthodoxy and heterodoxy; but many of them are written in a popular and taking style, and command a very wide circulation. It is certain that many Catholics are attracted by such writings, and read them. It is impossible that such reading can but unsettle faith and affect the purity and vigour of Catholic conviction. It is the constant labour and anxiety of priests to prevent the more intelligent members of their flocks from taking up the cheap, well-written and well-meaning periodicals and volumes which undoubtedly supply a natural and instinctive want in a Christian mind—the want of information about God and the soul, time and eternity, this world



and the world to come. The only effective way to cope with such a danger as this is to give our people a sufficient supply of reading of the right sort. Even if there were no competitors in the field, the Catholic flock have a right to the intelligent and attractive exposition of their holy religion—a subject which more than any other lends itself to treatment at once precise and devotional. Precision and orthodoxy are secured by the training of the Catholic priest, who spends many laborious years in acquiring what he puts forth to the public with so much care and persuasiveness. A devotional tone comes naturally to one who writes for the good of immortal souls. If I am not mistaken there are large numbers of our English, Irish, American and Australian Catholics who would readily accept any book, written with a fair amount of literary power, which shall place their religion before them with fulness, with security, with devotional emphasis, and at the same time in a language that they can understand.

† J. C. H.



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## CHAPTER I.

### INFINITE LOVE.

“Solus amor est quo convertimur ad Deum, transformamur in Deum, adhæremus Deo, unimur Deo, ut simus unus spiritus cum eo et beatificemur, hic in gratia, et ibi in gloria, ab eo et per eum.”—ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De adhærendo Deo*.

WHAT the sun is in the material order, that love is in the social and moral order. As the sun burnishes the tips of the mountains, lights up the valleys, and converts seas and rivers into liquid gold, making a Paradise where but a moment ago all was cheerless and dark, so love casts a charm over the commonest life, and infuses warmth and colour, and beauty and pathos, into the most ordinary and humdrum existence. The newly-born infant lives, develops and grows strong as it basks in the sunshine of its mother's love; and even grown-up men and women turn as naturally and as eagerly towards a devoted friend as the sunflower is said to turn towards the sun.

Of all topics that can engross the mind, the only one of which men never seem to tire or grow weary is love. It forms the very warp and woof of ro-

mance and of story. It is the soul and vivifying principle of poetry and fiction. It is the unfailing inspirer of art, and painting, and music, and song. It creates the valour of the soldier, the daring of the explorer, the plodding perseverance of the scholar, and the unflinching courage of the martyr. Under its influence the weak become strong, the despondent hopeful, and the niggardly generous. It changes, transforms and ameliorates whatever it touches; and infuses a nobler and higher impulse wherever its influence penetrates.

It is so congenial to man, so completely in accordance with his natural temperament, that he cannot wholly dispense with it, unless indeed by God's grace he rise altogether above nature. If, in sooth, there be in this world one poor sufferer more sure than another of exciting compassion and awakening sympathy, it is the lonely and desolate heart that has no one to befriend it, no one to address it a kind word. What notion, indeed, do we instinctively form of heaven itself, but a place of pure unclouded love? And what is the worst picture we can draw of hell, but a place where love is stifled and extinguished, and cursed hate and jealousy hold sway and rule supreme?

This would prove a sad and dreary world but for the bright, warm sunshine shed by loving hearts. For love illuminates our darkness; it causes the



desert itself to blossom as a garden, weaves threads of golden splendour into the dull texture of a cheerless life, and creates a veritable paradise even on the confines of hell. It is sweet to be loved even by the dumb, unconscious beast. The shepherd tending his flock on the lonely mountain side finds solace in the friendly whelping of his dog; and the Arab in his tent feels the arid desert less lonesome, and the night less drear, when the familiar neighing of his tethered steed breaks upon his ear.

But higher, by an immeasurable distance, is the joy that kindles at the delicious intercourse of man with man. The doting parent positively beams with happiness when his children press around his knees, the love-light gleaming on every feature, and lips all eloquent with endearing words. Yet, greatest of all mere earthly delights is the delight of the bridegroom as he leads his bride triumphantly to the altar to pledge eternal friendship to her in presence of God and of man.

Yes! Even human love is full of beauty and of gladness. And why? Simply and solely (as it seems to me) because it is a shadow; a poor, unworthy and feeble shadow, indeed, but yet a real shadow of one of the most tremendous and sublime realities, *viz.*, God's overpowering love to us.

If the love that is born of creatures can be so

welcome, so cheering, so gladdening, and so soul-inspiring, what are we to say, what, indeed, *can* we say of the love of Him who is not a creature at all, however perfect and however exquisite, but the Infinite and the Uncreated? What is all earthly affection compared with the fierce consuming fire of Divine love burning in the Sacred Heart of the world's Redeemer? On this earth we hardly dare expect to gain the affection of any one much above us in rank or station. A poor, rough peasant scarcely looks for love from a mighty king or emperor. The utmost he dares hope for is compassion, consideration, condescension and sympathy. Yet God, though infinitely removed above us by nature and essence, deigns to love us in the fullest and truest sense of the term, and in a far more generous measure than any creature ever did or ever can. In plain truth, all love, such as we find among men, is but a dim and uncertain reflection of the insatiable love of the Creator for His creatures. The impassioned sense of tenderness of a fond mother for her only child, or the all-absorbing devotion of the bridegroom for his youthful bride, scarce merits the name of love; nay, it is (even when purest and deepest and most intense) but the veriest mockery of love, and no love at all when compared with the love that God bestows even on the least soul in the state of grace.

After all, it is clear that man can love only according to the capacity of his nature ; and how cramped and straitened that is ! God's nature, on the other hand, is infinite and unlimited, and He loves with His whole being. Nor did His love begin in time, nor with the first dawn of our own existence. His love for you and me is like Himself, in this at least—that it is *eternal*. Throughout the unnumbered past æons and cycles He not only knew us and contemplated us in His own mind, but He loved us also. In fact, but for this love, we never could have been. It was His love, and His love only, and not the thought of any interest or advantage that He could expect to derive from our existence, that determined Him to call us from the hollow womb of nothingness into a state of actual being. Behold, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3).

To any one who at all realises the majesty and unapproachable glory of God on the one hand, and the ineffable tenderness and depth of His love on the other, there is something positively intoxicating in the thought. Who would ever fear, or doubt, or hesitate, or despair, if he were really and indeed intimately conscious to himself that the loving arms of Omnipotence are wound about him all the day long, and that nothing in heaven or on earth



can possibly approach to injure or molest him without permission from that Divine Lover, whose love on the one hand is infinite, and whose power on the other hand is commensurate with His Love? To be *fully sensible* of all this is to be calm and happy, and to share in some measure in the felicity of the saints. *Sed, quis est hic, et laudabimus eum!*

There are two wondrous qualities in the love God bears towards men which can never be sufficiently realised, and which we should therefore frequently call to mind and ponder over: firstly, its intensity; and, secondly, its essentially personal character.

I. Like a true, warm-hearted lover, He is never weary of expressing His love, and, as it were, whispering into our ears fresh assurances of His enduring attachment. At one time in the most explicit terms, and at others by figures and symbols, He seeks to enforce the same sweet truth upon us, and to persuade us more and more fully of the depths of that charity which the Apostle tells us "surpasseth all understanding" (Ep. iii. 19). "Fear not," He exclaims, "for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name: *thou art Mine!*" (Is. xliii. 1). "I have loved thee with an *everlasting love*" (Jer. xxxi. 3). And in what measure, and with what strength? He answers the query



Himself: "As the Father loved Me, *so have I loved you.*"

And, as though mere verbal expressions of His unending love were not sufficient to reveal its depth and extent, He has recourse to images and figures. He represents Himself on one occasion as the devoted father of an ungrateful and prodigal son. The son has heartlessly abandoned his father, and squandered his time and his fortune, living riotously among strangers in a foreign land. Yet his dissolute life and disgraceful conduct cannot extinguish his father's love. On the contrary, he yearns to welcome him back, and to enfold him again in his arms. Each day he ascends the brow of the hill and scans the distant plain to see if can discern any traces of the well-beloved child retracing his steps. At last, after many a fruitless effort, his eyes detect a changed and care-worn figure. In spite of rags and tatters and dissolute look and disconsolate condition, the father, with unerring instinct, recognises his wayward boy. Yet no thought of anger or reproach enters his heart. No words of rebuke or chiding rise to his lips. His face is not even ruffled by a scowl or a frown. All his just and righteous indignation is overpowered and quenched by the strength and vehemence of his love, which wells up from his heart and stifles every other feeling.

At once he hastens to receive him. In his joy and gladness the father forgets his son's baseness and ingratitude, and all the grief and sorrow and bitterness he has caused, and hurries along to embrace him, and to clasp him with infinite tenderness to his bosom. He clothes him with the finest linen, he puts sandals on his naked feet, decks him out in the best he has, and places the ring upon his finger, and the staff in his hand. The fatted calf is killed, the banquet is prepared, the choicest wines flow freely; the whole household is made to share in the general rejoicing, and all feast in happiness and delight, because he that was lost is found; he that was dead has come again to life; and the poor erring son has returned once more to his father's home. What a beautiful and consoling picture of God's attitude towards sinful and repentant men!

At another time our Lord represents Himself as a shepherd watching over his sheep, gently leading the flock to rich pastures, carefully defending them from prowling wolves and fierce beasts of prey, and going many a weary mile after those that have wandered astray. Or, again, He is the Good Samaritan, who, finding a poor traveller lying wounded and disabled on the roadside, and robbed and stripped of all his goods and possessions, descends from his own horse, and stops to

tend and dress his gaping wounds, pouring in oil and wine, places him on his own beast, and lays him in a place of safety.

Indeed, our Divine Master seems to lay all nature under contribution. Even among irrational creatures He searches for images and types expressive of His solicitude for us. He likens Himself now to the hen that gathers her little ones under her wings; now to the pelican that was believed to feed her young with the blood from her own breast; or, again, to the vine giving life and nourishment to the branches: "I am the vine, you are the branches". He is also "the tree of Life" (Apoc. ii. 7); the "Light of the world" (Is. ix. 2); the "Bright and Morning Star" (Apoc. xxii. 16); the "Shadow of the Rock" (Is. xxii. 2); the "Door of the sheepfold" (John x. 7); the "Head of the Body of the Church" (Col. i. 18); and, sweetest title of all, the true "Bridegroom" (Matt. ix. 15). A chapter might be devoted to the explanation of each one of the names which are applied by the Holy Spirit to God, so pregnant are they with meaning, and so much do they tell us of Him whose special name is LOVE. *Deus charitas est.*

But true love never rests satisfied with words. It longs to prove itself by deeds, and cannot remain inactive. God's love is no exception to this rule. It manifests itself in ten thousand beautiful

ways. It meets us at every turn. It overflows upon us from all sorts of unexpected channels and on all sorts of undreamed-of occasions. It would be worse than useless to attempt to enumerate a tithe of them here. But we must at least touch upon a few of the most remarkable manifestations of God's goodness towards us.

We have already hinted at one, *viz.*, our creation from nothing : a wholly gratuitous act which must be traced back to God's immeasurable love, as to its true source, and to love alone. But our dependence upon Him does not end here. God not only made us, each moment He preserves us, and supports us in life ; watches over us as a mother over an only child, and defends us from a thousand evils. All that we have and are, are effects of His love. Every object whose presence brings joy to us, whose beauty gladdens us, whose friendship cheers and brightens existence, is from Him. All that in any way administers to our bodily comfort or mental content, all that is in any degree pleasant, delightful and joy-yielding in social intercourse or family life ; all, all without exception, are tokens and earnestings of His undying love.

But even this exuberance and generosity could not satisfy the longings of His heart. Indeed, it is the characteristic of excessive love never to ad-

mit it has done enough. Thus, having rifled all nature of its treasures to lay them at our feet; having given us the earth for our temporary abode; the sun to illumine and warm us; birds and beasts and every living creature to subserve our interests; fire and water, and steam and electricity, and all the other powers of nature to labour for our benefit, He wished to do still more. He determined to lift us above nature; yea, as far above nature as the heavens are above the earth. His love induced Him to confer upon us a dignity, a position and an honour surpassing the uttermost capacities of mere nature. A dignity, in fact, which all the wealth of the material creation put together could never purchase, *viz.*, the dignity conferred by Divine grace received in holy Baptism. Yes; wonderful to say, by grace we are made "participators of the Divine Nature"; adopted sons of God; brothers of Christ Himself; heirs to an imperishable kingdom; and princes of the only truly Royal House of the King of kings: a dignity too great for us in our present state to understand; and which words cannot express; which mind fails to conceive, and which no created intelligence is capable of *adequately* realising—to do so would be to measure the measureless, to pour the whole ocean into the hollow of our hand.

This is a treasure too priceless to be purchased,



too magnificent ever to be really merited; giving us a claim to heaven itself, and to the possession of the infinitely Perfect for the whole of eternity. "I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1). When we have said this, we can say no more. Even a Power that is measureless, and a Wisdom that is limitless, can give us nothing greater, nothing more exquisite, nothing more Divinely beautiful and precious than the Infinite and the Eternal; and in possessing Him, we, in the strictest sense of the words, possess all things. Nevertheless, He was still dissatisfied. Love seeks, as far as possible, to put itself on an equality with the beloved. Now God could not make us equal to Himself, since the idea itself involves a contradiction. It was not possible for Him to lift us up to His level, and to transform us into gods. But, though He could not place us on a level with Himself, He could at least abase Himself and sink to our level. This His infinite love prevailed upon Him to do. He assumed our nature; became a man as truly as we are men; clothed Himself with our infirmities and necessities, and "dwelt amongst us" as one of ourselves.

Nor was this an act of passing condescension. He took upon Himself our human nature to retain it. He is still man—verily, as truly man as He is truly God. His human body and His hu-

man soul are at this very moment rejoicing the blessed in the highest heavens; and never for one instant, throughout the endless ages of eternity, will he dissociate Himself from our manhood. Again and again we hear the Mystery of the Incarnation spoken of and referred to; but who will give us the power of appreciating all that it means to us men and women of the earth? In associating Himself with us in this truly wondrous manner, God exalts the entire race in a degree that cannot be measured. He ennobles, elevates and honours every single member of the great human family. From the moment in which He "was made flesh," He is no longer our Creator merely, nor merely our Lord and Benefactor, our First Beginning and Last End, but He has entered into new relations with us, and has drawn ten thousand times nearer towards us. He has become our Elder Brother, our intimate associate, one of our own family; bone of our bone, blood of our blood, and flesh of our flesh. What a ravishing thought! that even the least of us can claim a relationship, and *such* a relationship, with the Irresistible and the Omnipotent! with Him who rides on the wings of the winds; who poises the earth upon three fingers; who holds the oceans in the hollow of His hands; who can do all things whatsoever He pleases; without whose

sanction nothing can stir in Heaven or on earth; and without whose actual permission and co-operation not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor a dry leaf is swept away by the hurrying storm.

Wonderful as this undoubtedly is, it is far more wonderful to note that God not only became man (which might have been accomplished without one pang of suffering), but that He became, like us, a suffering man—a “man of sorrows acquainted with infirmity” (Is. liii. 3). His prodigal love moved Him to share not our nature only, but our distress and humiliations, our sadness and disappointments, and even our trials and temptations. He made Himself subject to fatigue, weariness, languor, and to the pains of hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, labour, bodily and mental anguish, and finally death. And such a death! Too cruel, too full of bitterness and shame almost to think of, save with tears of sorrow and compassion. Not through any necessity—for is He not Lord and Master of all?—but through deliberate choice; out of pure love; in order to cheer us in sorrow; and to infuse strength and courage and a brave hope in our fainting and faltering hearts; and to draw out the sting from our death, by dying Himself for all.

Can love extend further than this? One might think not. But love is so mysterious a power. It is so unlike all else. It possesses such unsus-



pected resources. It is so strangely inventive. Oh! love will discover ways and means of encompassing its designs, of which nothing but love would so much as dream.

Jesus Christ was not content to die, and then to depart from our midst for ever. "I will not leave you orphans" (John xiv. 18). Quite the contrary. He would be more than ever with us after His crucifixion. He would multiply His corporal presence almost indefinitely. Before that awful immolation upon the cross, He was, as man, in but one place in all the earth. Now, on the contrary, He deigns to dwell in every town and city and hamlet. In the vast metropolis; in the busy hives of industry; in the quiet country village; and in the humblest and remotest places of earth, He holds His court, and receives His friends. Wherever there are gathered together a few devout worshippers and a priest to administer to them, there too He is found in their midst. It is the same all over the world. As the express train, panting and throbbing under its hidden fires, hurries us along through France and Germany, Switzerland and the Tyrol, and we snatch hasty glimpses of a Catholic church tower or a cathedral spire, we know that He is there. When tarrying in foreign lands, how often the silvery notes of the Mass or Vesper bells, re-

sounding through some sequestered valley, or across the waters of some slumbering lake or inland sea, stealing upon our ears, arrest our wandering thoughts, and lead us to muse on the love that has led God to dwell among His chosen ones in every nation!

What belated traveller in far-off climes, wending his tortuous way between rocky heights and mountain ranges, has not, while gazing as it seemed almost into the very clouds, beheld the precipitous walls of a convent or monastery, perched upon the summit of some beetling eminence, or clinging like an eagle's nest to the crags and projections of some terrific cliff, and has not thought, as he gazed, that there too the King of eternal glory dwells under the sacramental species; where men have gone to pass their days in prayer and contemplation, far from the maddening, noisy, distracting crowd?

But this multiplied presence; this prodigality of love; this desire on the part of our Lord to be wherever a human heart beats, or an adoring soul lives, though a most astounding effect of Divine charity, is surpassed by the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The great Lover of souls would be not only present, not only in the closest proximity, and, if we may so express it, face to face with His chosen ones, but

in actual union with each soul His hands have made. As a mother will not merely watch and tend her helpless offspring, but will draw the puny infant to her bosom, and, not satisfied with "kissing it with the kisses of her mouth," will offer it her breast, and thus incorporate her very substance with the substance of the child, so that it lives and feeds, and develops and grows strong on the very flesh of the mother; so does God the omnipotent draw us tenderly to Himself, and as it were incorporate Himself with our very substance in the Holy Eucharist, in such wise that we live our supernatural life through Him and by Him and on Him. "My flesh is meat indeed; My blood is drink indeed. Who eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him" (John vi. 56, 57). He truly and actually enters our souls; occupies our hearts; reposes within us as within a living tabernacle, and so possesses our very being, when we place no obstacle in His way, that we may justly exclaim with St. Paul: "I live; no, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). There in the very centre of our soul He holds His court. "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31); and so intimate and close is the union that then takes place between the poor creature and the powerful Creator, that Christ Himself does not

hesitate to compare it with that mysterious union which is greatest of all and absolutely unique, namely, the union between Himself and the Eternal Father. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me" (John vi. 58).

It is impossible for any one to think seriously of what Holy Communion really is, without feeling, if I may so express myself, bewildered, overwhelmed and almost confounded by the undreamed-of and wholly unparalleled depths of Divine condescension it supposes. It is so profound and unfathomable a mystery, and indicates a charity so measureless and infinite, that one feels almost as though one dared not think of it, lest the thought should crush and paralyse one's heart and senses. A kind of spiritual tremor or vertigo seems to seize upon one, such as one experiences in the physical order on looking, fearfully and fitfully from the beetling edge of some gigantic height, down a measureless fall of sheer precipitous rock.

Oh! if our eyes were not heavy with spiritual torpor, and our senses not steeped in a lethargic sleep, I know not how we should ever dare to approach and receive into our heart of hearts Him whom the heavens cannot contain, and "who dwells in light inaccessible" (1 Tim. vi. 16).

There is nothing on earth that can compare with this union. No love less than infinite love could have devised or contrived half so beautiful or half so sumptuous a banquet for the weary pilgrim, wending his way along the dusty road of life to the great city of God.

Further than this we cannot go—at least not in *this* life. There is nothing between this and the Beatic Vision itself. In the adorable Eucharist we have all that we shall ever have in heaven. The differences are only accidental. When the consecrated particle rests upon our tongues, we hold within us all that constitutes the essential bliss of the saints in eternal glory; the difference is merely that we fail to realise it. We possess it, but without being able to estimate what we possess. If, by some stupendous miracle, our eyes were suddenly opened, we should find that we were really in heaven; or rather that heaven itself had come down upon us, and entered into our souls. How countless are the ways in which God proves his love for men! We have but touched upon a few of them, yet we must reluctantly pass by others, so that a few words may be said on the *personal* nature of God's love.

II. I know of no point of more practical interest or of more pressing importance than this. Man yearns to be loved individually and personally,



and on his own account, and not merely as one of a multitude. Thus, there is a danger of our very much undervaluing God's love for us, from the very fact that we know that He loves innumerable other creatures besides. We are naturally wont to estimate a man's love at a higher and higher rate, according as it is more and more exclusive. Indeed, we are inclined to regard with a certain air of suspicion, and almost to doubt the strength and depth of a love which is shared by millions upon millions of others. We hunger after an affection which shall be not only intense but undivided.

Now, this is, no doubt, a just way of reasoning when we are dealing with mere human, and therefore finite love. A weak human creature cannot by any possibility love a whole multitude with any degree of intensity. What is gained in quantity must by the nature of finite things lose in quality. The most fathomless ocean would soon become no deeper than a street puddle if its waters were spread over ten million million square miles. So the deepest and intensest human affection would soon be reduced to zero if divided among a vast number. True; but we must bear in mind that this arises from the necessary limitations of human nature, which limitations can have no place in God. Such reasoning, therefore, when applied

to Him is utterly fallacious. The most essentially beautiful characteristic of God's love is just precisely that it is so eminently personal and so essentially heart to heart.

We may illustrate the nature of Divine love by comparing it with Divine wisdom. Thus: God knows all things. He reads the secret thoughts and most intimate yearnings of all men and angels at one and the same moment, and, indeed, for the matter of that, by one and the same act. He sees, clearly, fully, accurately, without confusion and without effort, every creature that ever was, that is, or ever shall be; He knows all as each, and each as all. Take any individual—say, myself, now reading this page. He knows me so intimately, so perfectly, so profoundly, and so exhaustively, that it is metaphysically impossible that He could know me a whit more perfectly than He does. Even if, *per impossibile*, He were to withdraw His gaze from all other creatures in heaven and on earth to fix His whole mind upon me alone, and exclusively, nothing whatever would be added to the perfection of His knowledge.

With us it is very different. We can direct our complete attention to one thing only at a time; we can follow but one train of thought at any given moment. Should we attempt to attend to many different things at once, indistinctness and con-

fusion must inevitably result. Such is one of the differences between God's knowledge and ours. Now an exactly analogous difference exists between God's love and ours.

Let the reader thus muse within himself. God knows me and loves me, singly and individually, just as truly, just as intimately as though He knew no other and loved no other. He loves me no whit less because He loves millions and millions besides me. He loves me because He has made me; because His own Divine image—the image of the ever-Blessed Trinity—is indelibly impressed upon me; because He has adorned and enriched my soul by His heavenly grace, transforming it into a thing of extreme loveliness and exquisite splendour. And He loves me because I am His own child by adoption; an heir to His throne; and purchased with a great price (1 Cor. vi. 20). This any one may say—and say with undeniable truth if his soul be in a state of grace.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that God loves myriads of saints and angels together with me, and much more than me, cannot in the slightest degree interfere with the

<sup>1</sup> “Per charitatem intime ac filialiter Deo conjungimur: per hanc enim ita nobis communicatur et unitur Spiritus Sanctus, seu *ipsa divinitas*, ut ex hac unione efficiamur filii Dei, tanquam participes effecti divinæ naturæ” (Lessius, *De N. D.*, p. 194).

“Charitas facit homines deiformes” is the teaching of St. Thomas, 1, 2, Q. 65, 5. c.



genuineness of the love He bears me personally. If I alone existed, if God possessed throughout the measureless realms of possible space no other creature but myself, He would love me neither more nor less than at present, nor would His love be even the faintest shadow of a degree more personal. His love of me increases or diminishes with my own personal sanctity, but is absolutely independent of the amount of Divine love lavished upon others. St. Paul said: "He loved *me*, and delivered Himself for *me*" (Gal. ii. 20). With equal truth, I may employ similar language and say, *e.g.*, He watches over, not simply men in general, but over *me*, ceaselessly and unintermittently. I may forget Him: He can never forget me. I may lose consciousness in sleep: He never, even for a moment, relaxes His guard over me. He follows me at every step through life with a providence so marked and so special that it could not be greater or more personal or more minute though there were no others to provide for. On the other hand, were the existing multitudes of men and angels and of living creatures of all kinds even ten thousand times more numerous than they are, their government and control would tend in no measure to render God's care and solicitude for me individually less detailed or less special. He is not like a frail crea-

ture, to be disturbed or affected by numbers or by multiplicity. The most delightful and special charm of God's love is just precisely its extraordinary individual character.

Practically, I may—indeed I ought always to—treat with God in the same intimate way and with the same secret familiarity as though He and I alone existed, and as though He had no one else upon whom to bestow a thought. The more earnestly I strive to carry out His will, and the more carefully I endeavour to please Him in all things, the more his love of me will deepen. Unlike the earthly lover, who may weep and sigh and pine in vain for one too distant to catch the words that breathe and the thoughts that burn, we know that God listens to every sigh, hears every sob, watches every tear, and measures every pulsation, as though no other task devolved upon Him but to contemplate the individual soul as it seeks to win His love. What a glorious impossibility! I cannot so much as think of Him, but He rejoices at it; or breathe an ejaculatory prayer, but He hearkens to it and blesses me for it. He is, in fact, present within me, and as absolutely and as wholly present as though He were nowhere else. No earthly lovers were ever so closely united, or so intimately present to one another, or so undistractedly absorbed in each

other's affections as God and the soul in grace.<sup>1</sup> Hence we must cast aside for ever all those prevalent, though utterly false notions, which, no doubt, arise from our tendency to apply to Divine love what can be true of human love alone.

It is only by realising what an intense reality God's love is, and calling to mind its extraordinary personal quality, that we can at all understand, I will not say the joyousness and buoyancy which habitually characterised the famous solitaries of old, but even their bare possibility. What man *could* pass ninety long years of unbroken solitude in the desert, like St. Paul of Thebes, without going mad, or, at all events, growing morose and testy, unless his love of God and God's love of him were something eminently actual, personal and practical? The hermits, anchorites and solitaries of the early Church, and the silent religious of various contemplative orders of the present day, are inexplicable on any other supposition. But in the midst of the cares and anxieties of an active life in the world, we too must draw our pleasure, joy and gladness at the same unfailling source.

<sup>1</sup> As Albertus Magnus points out : " Est enim amor ipse virtutis unitivæ et transformativæ, transformans amantem in amatum : et e contra, ut sit unum amatorum in altero, et e converso, in quantum intimius potest " (chap. xii.).

Oh! beautiful and consoling doctrine! Each footsore and weary wayfarer on earth may truly exclaim: "The Infinite and the All-perfect loves me, personally, intimately and individually—not as one of a vast indistinguishable mass, but me, N.N., with my own special character, qualities, disposition, antecedents and history; yea, He loves me with a love which is indescribable and inconceivable; which no language can express, no imagination picture, and no mind fathom, no thought reach, no heart encompass. A love which I cannot measure; which I comprehend not, and in this life cannot comprehend; a love which outstrips all figures and symbols, defies all numerical expression, and which would dilate and rend my heart with gladness, and so terminate my physical life, were I made fully conscious of it,<sup>1</sup> a love, compared to which all human love is cold and barren and hollow—in a word, He, the Almighty and Eternal, loves a soul in grace with an infinite love; and therefore with an ardour not only above, but immeasurably above, all created love, whether human or angelic."

It seems a bold statement to make, yet it is easily shown. To begin with; it is, by God's ex-

<sup>1</sup> Lessius says: "Sæpe amor potest esse tam vehemens, ut sequatur mors, omni spiritu vitali, præ nimia cordis dilatatione, diffluente. Sic multi putant B. Virginem vi amoris mortuam!" (*De Nom. Dei*, p. 212).

press declaration, infinite in duration: "I have loved with an everlasting love". But, more than that, it is also infinite<sup>1</sup> in intensity; though only, of course, in the sense explained by the angel of the schools, the gifted St. Thomas Aquinas.

What is meant by love? To love a person is to wish him well.<sup>2</sup> If, for instance, a man desires

<sup>1</sup> The love God bears His rational creatures is correctly spoken of as "infinite". Yet the term may prove misleading unless accompanied by some explanation. It may not be unprofitable, therefore, to remind our readers that while the love is infinite on the part of the Giver, it is necessarily finite on the part of the receiver. This love receives no limitation from the Divine nature, for it is identical therewith; yet it is, *de facto*, limited by the very condition of the creature. Thus: God gives Himself entirely (*in esse intelligibili, e.g.*, to a glorified soul in heaven). And, by virtue of the "lumen gloriæ," such a soul possesses all God (*totus*), but obviously not wholly (*totaliter*). Or, to put it in a different way: the soul in embracing God most undoubtedly embraces and enjoys an infinite good, but in an essentially finite manner. God is infinite, and God gives Himself to the individual soul. But the soul can possess Him only according to the measure of its capacity, which must, under every conceivable hypothesis, remain ever circumscribed and limited. Even the *humanity* of Christ does not receive the Divine gift and love infinitely, for St. Thomas teaches: "Humanitas Christi, ex hoc quod est unita Deo, etc., habet *quamdam* infinitatem" (pp. q. 25, a. 6, ad. 4). So, R. P. Bellecius, S.J., writing of the benefits of God, says: "Et hæc beneficia Deus tibi contulit modo singulari, nempe *amore æterno*, non citius Se quam te amando; eoque *infinito*, videlicet eo ipso, quo Seipsum diligit; mereque gratuito, sine ullâ indigentia propriæ commodo". Exercitia, etc., p. 101.

Compare St. Thom., pp. q. 12, a. 7, corp.: "Nullus intellectus creatus potest Deum *infinite* cognoscere," etc.; q. 20, a. 3, ad 2<sup>dum</sup>: "Bonum quod Deus creaturæ vult, non est divina essentia"; and q. 19, a. 5, c.: "Deus sicut uno actu omnia in essentia sua intelligit, ita uno actu vult omnia in sua bonitate".

<sup>2</sup> "Amare nihil aliud est quam velle bonum alicui" (St. Th.).



that another should enjoy health and happiness, and dignities and prosperity; if he actually bestows upon him riches, favours and honours (especially when there is nothing to hope for in return), we rightly conclude that the donor possesses a true love for his friend. Furthermore, the costliness of the gifts bestowed marks in some measure the degree of love. The more valuable the gifts he wishes to bestow upon his friend, and the greater the good he seeks to procure him, the greater, evidently, is the love he bears him. Now, apply this principle to God, and ask what kind of good He seeks to bestow upon us. It is not a created good at all. It is nothing finite, however precious or exalted; it is the Infinite, the Uncreated, and the Eternal, the absolute good. It is nothing less than God Himself. "I am thy reward exceeding great." We are made for nothing less than the possession of God for all eternity.

To confer a great good upon another is to love him with a great love; but to confer upon another an infinite good, is, most assuredly, to love with an infinite love—especially when the donor can expect no return, and no equivalent. Yet such is the love of God for His children, even for the least and most humble of them all so long as he is striving with all his heart to keep the commandments.

How sadly strange, and how strangely sad it is that, notwithstanding all this, men think so much of the love of creatures, so little of the love of the Creator; that they set such an extortionate price on the puny affections of a sinful man or woman, and are so insensible to the measureless affection of God; that, in a word, they will move heaven and earth, and defy hell itself, to embrace the shadow, while often allowing the substance and the reality to escape them altogether. "O! Vita per quam vivo, sine qua morior, ubi quæso es? Ubi te inveniam? Prope esto in animo, prope in corde, prope in ore, prope in auribus, prope in auxilio: quia amore langueo, quia sine te morior!"



## CHAPTER II.

### THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE OF GOD.

“Causa primera de todo  
Sois, Señor, y en todo estais  
. . . . No escribe la tierra  
Con caractéres de flores  
Grandezas vuestras?” etc. —CALDERON.

“Certe hoc est Deus, quod cum dicitur, non potest dici; cum æstimatur, nos potest æstimari; cum definitur, ipse definitione crescit.”—S. GREG. NAZ.

**R**EASON, alone and unaided, is sufficient to inform man of God's existence. Even the untutored savage and wild barbarian may find in this visible and material world proofs and arguments enough of His Divine presence. Yet, neither reason nor revelation can make clear and intelligible to us the intimate nature and attributes of that Supreme Being, whom the Scriptures remind us “no man hath seen at any time” (John i. 18).

Nor is this to be wondered at. Even of created beings, how extremely limited is our knowledge! Even in respect to the visible tangible world about us, how very little it is that we really know! What can the wisest philosopher, the profoundest scientist, the subtlest metaphysician tell us—I will not say of God, but of man; aye, or even of the sim-

plest and most insignificant creeping thing that man crushes without a pang beneath his feet?

What, indeed, do we understand by life itself? What really *is* that mysterious, invisible, immaterial, energising principle within the body of a man which keeps the heart beating and the blood ever coursing, year after year, through artery and vein, for the better part of a century and sometimes more? What is that strange power animating our fragile house of clay, which, though spiritual and immaterial itself, yet sees through corporal eyes, hears through corporal ears, acts through corporal organs, and loves and languishes, and labours and lives in an earthly tabernacle? Though it abides within our own fleshy frame, yet we know not what it is. Nothing could be more closely bound up with us or more intimately united with us, for it is the chief part of ourselves; yet, near as it is, we can neither understand nor explain it, nor form any accurate notion of it even to ourselves.

Nay, more: life *in any form whatsoever* involves mystery. The life and power of movement even in a beast or an insect must pass away from our notice unexplained. We stand and gaze at the industrious spider deftly spreading its gauzy net on some waving bough in the airy ocean of the sky; we marvel at the beauty of the web, and at

the regularity of its geometrical form, and the delicacy of its gossamer threads; we are charmed and captivated with the ease and dexterity with which its author binds strand with strand, and weaves together the curious complicated structure. Yes, all this we can do. But when we begin to ask "how," and "why," and "by what impulse," and "under whose direction" these delicate and beautiful operations take place—well, we find ourselves proposing questions which a child might, indeed, ask, but which neither you, gentle reader, nor I, nor any living man, will ever be able really to solve—at least in this world. Life, in all its multitudinous forms, is girt about with mystery. The acorn, germinating in the ground, and stirring, as it were, from slumber, to awaken into life, is full of wonders. Watch, indeed, any simple seed as it builds up out of the rude materials that lie around it some graceful form of waving plant or blushing flower, and think how hopelessly inexplicable is the process. Whence come the delicate green stalk, the tender leaves, the unfolding buds and opening chalice-cup, so exquisitely wrought, so skilfully pieced together, so admirably poised and balanced, and, like some swinging censer, scattering sweetness with every movement? Whence comes this gorgeous apparition of glowing colour and dazzling splendour, this vision of beauty

that fails to startle us only because so frequently beheld? From what secret repository has it drawn the colours to paint the corona and the gold to gild the cup?—colours and tints which not even a Raphael d'Urbino or a Titian can hope to reproduce. A few weeks ago nothing was to be seen but a dark and barren stretch of loamy soil. On it we let fall a seed. Nursed by the warm sunshine and balmy winds, and fed by the dew and rains, it was successfully ushered into active life; and now, contemplate the beauteous object which that seed, like some skilled architect, has planned and constructed out of the dull unconscious earth—a crimson rose, or, perhaps, a tiger lily. Who will explain the secret vital power in the germ? Who will sit down and narrate to us how the various elements were selected and brought together, and transformed and arranged, and adjusted in such perfect symmetry through the agency of that silent and simple germ? A gigantic and hopeless task indeed! Scientists, botanists and horticulturists may, indeed, give names to the different processes; but then, to give a name is not quite the same thing as to explain. No! the truth is, we may contemplate, we may wonder at, and we may admire the many mysteries of life in the commonest wayside flower or shrub; but to give them, or any single one of

them, an exhaustive explanation is as impossible as to create them. That surpasses the power of man.

But if we are baffled by a shrub or a flower; if our proud intellect staggers and positively reels on its seat when striving to grasp and fathom the lowest and most imperfect forms of created life, how, in the name of common sense, can we expect to unravel the mystery of the Divine life of God, without beginning and without end, the source and author of all being? How, indeed, shall we gaze into the fathomless abyss of His incomprehensible perfections "who only hath immortality, and inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see, to whom be honour and empire everlasting. Amen" (1 Tim. vi. 16)?

We possess no faculty whereby we can measure any single one of His Divine attributes. Some faint notion may be formed of goodness, of wisdom, of truth, etc., yes, of *created* goodness, wisdom and truth; but not of goodness, wisdom and truth as they exist in God; for in Him each attribute is absolutely infinite and uncreated—not a quality, but identical with His substance and being, and wholly indistinguishable from it. And our finite minds can no more contain the Infinite than time can contain eternity, or than a part can contain the whole.



Nevertheless, although the goodness of God is infinitely above our comprehension, yet that He is good is clearly seen in creation. The creation also proclaims His wisdom. It is manifested in the order and regularity of the measureless heavens; it is made evident in the times and seasons observed by the countless stars, as they hurry on in their courses through the trackless realms of unmeasured space; and, in fact, in all things, great and small; even in the faultless symmetry and elegance of the tiniest organic structure, such as the limb of a microscopic animalcule, or the mouth, masticatory organs, stomach and alimentary canal of the Rotifera, or what are popularly known as the wheel animalcules. And what we assert regarding the goodness and wisdom of God holds good also of His power, patience and mercy, and all else of which creation speaks to us. "For the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity" (Rom. i. 20).

There is another truth, however, related to the inner life of God, which is not by any means so clear and manifest in creation: a truth which, in fact, cannot be positively demonstrated from the contemplation of visible things, although (as we hope to show in chaps. i. and ii. of Part the Second)

all visible things in some measure reflect it—and this truth God Himself has therefore been pleased to reveal directly. We need scarcely remark that we here refer to the adorable mystery of the ever-Blessed Trinity—perhaps of all mysteries the most difficult and incomprehensible. We may state a truth, however, without fully understanding it. Just as we may say that an oak tree will grow from an acorn, though we can in no way understand *how* it grows, nor unravel any one of the manifold mysteries of its organic development, so we may also state, and state accurately, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, while, at the same time, we confess our inability to fathom it. And, what is more, we accept it, not as scientific men accept a theory or a supposed discovery, *i. e.*, because we think it reasonable or because it fits in with our preconceived notions and opinions, but simply and solely because God has deigned to reveal it to us.

Let us begin by stating the doctrine. The great central fact at the base of all supernatural religion is that God is absolutely simple and one; and that there is no other God but Him. “I am the Lord, and there is no God beside Me” (Is. xlv. 5). Now, being but One in nature, we may readily infer that He would be solitary and without any community of thought unless He were, at least in



some respect, more than one. Throughout the whole realm of existing, or even of possible, creatures, there is not one that could furnish a really worthy or adequate object for God's contemplation, knowledge or love. Between Him and them there is no proportion; in fact, all things, including men and angels, are in His dread presence as though they were not. What, then, formed the object of God's thoughts, the object of His contemplation, and the object of His love for all eternity? Absolute solitude is, even to our way of thinking, utterly incompatible with absolute happiness. What, then, broke, so to speak, the eternal silence and relieved the unspeakable solitude of God? He Himself tells us. He reveals the secret of His life. He informs us that, though His nature is absolutely one and indivisible, that yet this nature is shared by three.

Though there is but one God, nevertheless there are in this one God three totally distinct and different Persons, *viz.*, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> All three possess not a similar, but the self-same nature. The Father is truly God, the Son is truly God, and the Holy Ghost is truly God; yet the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Ghost, and the Holy

<sup>1</sup> Consult *A Manual of Catholic Theology, based on Scheeben's "Dogmatik"*.

Ghost is neither Father nor Son : yet each is God, and there is but one God. The Divine nature is not *divided* between the Persons : each possesses it in its integrity and fulness ; yet the Divine nature is not multiplied, but one and indivisible.

The Divine nature is the same in each, and differs only in the manner in which it is possessed. The Father has it *from none* ; the Son has it *from the Father alone* ; the Holy Ghost receives it *from Father and Son*. Yet the Father retains while He gives ; and the Son receives, though He always had, and never began to have, but, like the Father and the Holy Ghost, is changeless and immutable. Though there is a relation of sonship, and of fatherhood, and of procession, yet these are relations not of time, or of dependence, or of inferiority, but relations of procession or of origin.

The Father is not more ancient than the Son, nor the Son than the Holy Ghost. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Ghost is eternal ; but there are not three eternals, but one eternal. So, in a similar way, though the Son is born of the Father, He is not inferior to the Father, but equal and consubstantial with the Father : His equal in glory, majesty, power, sanctity and wisdom ; and in nature one with the Holy Ghost.

The Father is omnipotent, infinite and omniscient; the Son is omnipotent, infinite and omniscient; and the Holy Ghost is omnipotent, infinite and omniscient; yet there are not three omnipotents, infinities and omniscients, but only One infinite, One omnipotent, and One omniscient.

The three Divine Persons, possessing the self-same nature, are inseparable though distinct. Where the Father is, there is the Son, and there is the Holy Ghost—so that one person by reason of His Divine nature must ever be accompanied by the other two.

Let us illustrate this by reference to the human nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God. In Jesus Christ, therefore, there dwelt, in inseparable unity, the Father and the Holy Ghost. It was not the Divine *nature* which became man. Had the nature of God become man, the Father and the Holy Ghost would be truly man, as well as the Eternal Son. But since it was not the *nature*, but the *Person* of God, and not the three Persons, but only the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity that was made man, the Father is not man, nor the Holy Ghost, but *only* God the Son. But though neither Father nor Holy Ghost became man, they both are inseparably and eternally united with the man Jesus Christ, who, as God, is one with them, and, so far as His Divine nature and

essence are concerned, indistinguishable from them.

Hence, in the Sacrament of the Altar, there is present not only Jesus Christ, but the Father and the Holy Ghost; and when we receive the Blessed Sacrament the very being and substance of the omnipotent God enters into our souls, and with His substance the three distinct but inseparable Divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The inseparable connection of the Divine Persons with one another is brought about in the most perfect manner by their relations of origin. The produced Persons (*i.e.*, the Son and the Holy Ghost) cannot even be conceived otherwise than in connection with their Principle (the Father), and, being the immanent manifestation of a *substantial* cognition and volition, they remain within the Divine Substance and are one with It. The producing Principle, likewise, cannot be conceived as such, and as a distinct Person, except inasmuch as He produces the other Persons. "The Divine Persons constitute a society unique in its kind: a society whose members are in the most perfect manner equal, related and connected."

There is, to use technical terms, perfect circum-incession, or comprehensive interpenetration, so that "each Person penetrates and pervades each

other Person, inasmuch as each Person is in each other Person with His whole essence, and possesses the essence of each other Person as His own; and again, inasmuch as each Person comprehends each other Person in the most intimate and adequate manner by knowledge and love; and as each Person finds in each other Person His own essence, it follows that it is one and the same act of knowledge and love by which one Divine Person comprehends and embraces the other Persons".<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine here recalled to the mind of our readers is, of course, absolutely inexplicable and incomprehensible. To try really to fathom it is to try with finger and thumb to pluck the stars from the vault of heaven, or to hold the waters of the vast Pacific within the hollow of our hands. Still, even this profound mystery may be, in some weak shadowy way, imaged forth and illustrated by creatures. Some notion of it, at least—however unworthy and incomplete—may be obtained (by way of analogy) through the study and contemplation of earthly things, and above all, and before all, by a thoughtful consideration of the soul of man, created, as it is, to the image and likeness of

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller summary of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, in English, see *A Manual of Catholic Theology, based on Scheeben's "Dogmatik"*, by Wilhelm & Scannell.



its Maker. To develop and explain these most wondrous and interesting adumbrations of God's triune nature in His works will require a separate treatment, so we must defer their consideration to the next chapter. In the meantime we may conclude by considering *why* God is pleased to reveal to us the incomprehensible truths of His own mysterious Being.

There are, no doubt, many good reasons. In the first place, that, knowing Him better, we may love and serve Him better. In the second place, that, growing more conscious of the infinite gulf that separates God from all that is not God, we may be filled with an ever-increasing and deepening awe and admiration of Him, before whom the very pillars of heaven tremble, and the angels themselves veil their faces. Another reason may be, in order that we may the better enter into the past eternal life of God, and understand how He could be supremely happy and exercise to the full all the activities of His being, independently of creatures.

But, passing over these and many other reasons that might be suggested, let us dwell for a few moments on what is, perhaps, the most practical one of all.

God reveals mysteries to man, in order to exercise him in obedience, to force him to submit



his highest faculty to Divine authority, to subdue his proud, rebellious heart, and to humble his conceit. For consider: the intellect is the greatest and the grandest natural gift of God to man. *That* it is which raises him so far above all other visible beings; *that* it is which sets the crown upon his head and the sceptre in his hand, and, in a word, makes him the monarch of the earth, the lord of the creation. Now, since intelligence is a gift from God, and held in dependence on God, God very rightly insists that man should, at least, acknowledge the gift, realise whence it comes, and pay fealty for it; and since it is the *highest gift*, it is of the *highest importance* that this acknowledgment should be made.

In a word, man must submit his intellect to God, just as every other faculty of his being. He must bow down his proud spirit, and yield his judgment and personal convictions to the teaching of Divine authority. Just as obedience is nothing more than the legitimate service and homage of the free-will, so faith is nothing else than the legitimate service and homage of the intellect; and the more difficult and obscure, and apparently contradictory and impossible, is the doctrine proposed, and the more completely it compels us to rest solely upon the rock of God's veracity, the more perfect and meritorious is the act of submission,

and the more profound the honour and reverence paid to God.

In these days true faith is rare, because men are eaten up by intellectual pride. Science, or what passes for science, is the idol of the hour. "What I understand," says the scientist, "that I accept; and what I fail to understand, that I as promptly reject." "What my reason approves, that I believe; and what my reason cannot attain to, I most emphatically refuse to believe." Such men read and lecture, and study and teach, and are listened to with such patient trust and humility by their followers, that at last they flatter themselves that they know all things; or, at all events, that they are in a position to investigate and even to pass judgment on every truth. They have measured the ocean, and weighed the earth, and counted the stars. They will offer to inform you concerning anything you may choose to ask them, from the length of the sun's diameter and its cubic contents in yards, down to the number of vibrations of a fly's wing per second, or the mode of progression of an amœba through a water-drop. Hence, having mastered so much, they insensibly begin to fancy that there is nothing that they cannot master. Indeed, we are all apt to forget the extremely limited range of the human intellect, so God recalls the fact to us, and humbles

our pride by putting before us truths, such as that of the Blessed Trinity, which we cannot possibly hope to unravel or explain, and by commanding us to accept them on His authority, or suffer the penalty of eternal death. Who is not a true child of the Church may fret and chafe under the ordeal, and, perhaps, even reject the doctrine altogether, refusing to submit his judgment to the revelations, even of God Himself. If, on the contrary, he be a dutiful subject, he will rejoice at such an occasion of testifying his unbounded trust in God, and, throwing himself on his knees in the dust, will feel happy in exclaiming with a deep sense of his own nothingness:—

“Thou, O Lord, art all light, and I am all darkness; Thou art the infinite and uncreated Wisdom, I am but pride and folly. I bow down myself before Thee, and submit readily, cheerfully and without hesitation to Thy teaching. Thou alone art the Lord, Thou alone art God, and there is none like to Thee in heaven or on earth. Thy voice is as sweetest music to my heart, and Thy words are a path to my feet; speak, for Thy servant heareth.”

We cannot honour God more than by trusting Him and confiding in Him, and the more sublime and exalted are the truths He proposes, the more thoroughly do we testify and prove the genuineness of our confidence by believing them.

God may, indeed, try us. He may test our faith as He tested the faith of Abraham; He may exercise us continually in this fundamental virtue. One thing, however, He cannot do. One thing is impossible even to the omnipotent God himself: He cannot deceive us; He cannot mislead us, or draw us into error, for He is the absolute and uncreated Truth. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His word shall *never* pass away.

## CHAPTER III.

### THOUGHTS ON THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD.

“Simplex esse, simplex posse  
Simplex velle, simplex nosse  
Cuncta sunt simplicia.”

—BOËTH, *Hymn.*

“Nach der Lehre der Offenbarung, wie nach der Vernunft, ist Gott absolut (d. h. nicht bloss physisch, sondern auch metaphysisch) einfach, so das in Ihm keine Zusammensetzung irgend welcher Art stattfindet, stattfinden kann und gedacht werden darf.”—Dr. SCHEEBEN.

HOW few persons there are, even among the good and fervent, who love to dwell upon that which, after all, is the grandest and most sublime of all subjects, *viz.*, the nature and attributes of God. Men may think often and devoutly of Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ is, of course, God as well as man; but, even in contemplating Him, they are wont to dwell almost exclusively on the human side of His character. They muse upon His sufferings, humiliations, labours and journeyings; they weep over His passion, death and burial; they picture to themselves His gentleness, condescension, patience and love; but the thought of His Divinity, His awful power, irresistible omnipotence and uncreated wisdom, His mysterious eternity, infinity and inaccessible purity and sanctity, seldom occupies the promi-

nent place in their minds which it assuredly deserves.

In fact, His human nature is so much easier to conceive, and His created soul is so far more intelligible an object, that some persons are really in danger of altogether overlooking the Divine nature which was His from all eternity.

Now, in contemplating God, the very first thought that naturally arises before us is His unity. So soon as we begin to exercise our reason on the subject, we find ourselves exclaiming "God is one!" One in nature, and, as faith teaches, three in Persons; one in essence, three in relation. The Trinity in God is a subject we shall deal with more fully in a future chapter; but let us now attempt to put down a few thoughts concerning His unity.

God is one in the strictest sense of the word: one intrinsically and in his own nature, as well as one in the sense of being without an equal.

The unity of God, considered in His own nature, we may speak of as the simplicity of God; thereby indicating the contrast that exists between it, on the one hand, and the multiplicity and complexity found in creatures on the other. For, in every being, save in God, there is a greater or less degree of complexity. Thus, man himself is composed of body and soul. The human body is



made up of various parts. Each part is distinct. The head is not the hand; the hand is not the foot; the foot is not the arm. So, too, as regards the soul. Though not a material substance—though not possessed of distinct organs or physical parts—still it is by no means simple, in the sense in which God is simple. The soul has various powers and attributes, and they are all distinct. The memory is not the will; the will is not the understanding; the understanding is not the imagination. And none of these is the soul itself. Each is merely a faculty of the soul. We cannot say that the soul *is* reason, or justice, etc. We can say only that the soul *has*, or exercises, reason, justice, etc. They are merely attributes of the soul, and distinct from the soul itself; so that there is a real difference between the soul and its faculties and powers, and no strict unity or absolute ontological identity exists between them.

God, on the contrary, is absolutely one and indivisible. It is true that we speak of the attributes of God; for this we are compelled to do owing to the exigencies of language. But God has no attributes in the ordinary sense of that term. We say God is “good”. But, to speak of a being as good, is to speak of him as possessing a certain quality; hence, if we wish to be exact, we cannot so speak of God. He does not possess goodness as something added to His essence: He *is* good-

ness. It is His very being. *Deus simplex, quia, quod habet, hoc est.* So of every other quality, which, by the necessity of human speech, we attribute to Him. He is not wise: He is wisdom. His wisdom is indistinguishable from Himself. The same must be said of His power, patience, sanctity, mercy, providence, and of all else. Such qualities are not *of* God or *in* God: they *are* God, and consequently not really "qualities" at all. This is why the Scripture does not inform us that God loves or that He has love, but that He is love. *Deus caritas est.*

Yes, "God is love"; and, as He is love, so is He also wisdom, power, omnipotence, beauty, sanctity, and all else; and yet His wisdom is but another name for His power; and His power is but another name for His love; and His love is but another name for His justice; and His justice but another name for His beauty. In the Deity, goodness, beauty, truth, wisdom, etc., do not exist as distinct attributes; they are all so many different names for His very essence, according to the different manner in which that essence is conceived and regarded by creatures. These, and the innumerable other terms which we employ, indicate, not an innumerable number of perfections, but an innumerable number of different aspects of the one infinite and indivisible perfection. The distinction we make between one Divine

perfection and another is not a real intrinsic distinction, but an ideal one; or, as theologians put it, not a *distinctio realis* but a *distinctio rationis*. We employ different words, not to indicate any objective change on the part of God, but simply to indicate the self-same indivisible and changeless essence of God, as it presents itself, now in one way, now in another, to our limited understandings. In fact, we do very much what we do when speaking of terrestrial things. We speak, for example, of the sun *rising* and the sun *setting*. There is no real distinction between the setting and the rising sun; for, strictly speaking, the sun neither rises nor sets. It is the earth alone that is responsible for the phenomena so described. It is the earth, not the sun, that changes its position. This terrestrial movement, however, gives to the sun a different appearance in our eyes; and, to indicate this difference, we call it by a distinct name. We speak of the altered relation as though it were the sun itself that varied and shifted its position.

Unity, as it exists in God, is so absolute that it admits of no modification or alteration whatsoever. In fact, change is metaphysically impossible, except in a finite being. For what does every change necessarily imply? Either an addition of some kind, or a privation of some kind. In fact, change cannot be accounted for on any other hypothesis. Take a familiar example. To-day I am beaming

with happiness; to-morrow I am a prey to the most acute sorrow. Why the change? Perhaps, because news reaches me of the death of a devoted friend; *i.e.*, my knowledge has been increased: or, again, it may be because I have lost my riches, my reputation, or my health; *i.e.*, something has been withdrawn from me, which before I possessed and enjoyed. And, since every change supposes an accession or a privation, God must be changeless. For He is infinite in every respect; and He who is infinite in every respect cannot receive increase, for what is capable of increase is necessarily limited. So, for a similar reason, neither can the infinite suffer any decrease or privation. For so soon as anything is wanting, the infinite ceases to be infinite; or, in other words, God must cease to be God—which is, of all impossible things, the most impossible.

It may help somewhat to clear our views on this subject if we here remark that even creatures enjoy a certain measure of unity. A man is the same man to-day and yesterday—that is to say, there is the same individual, the same *suppositum*; but still we cannot say that there is actual identity. He may be sometimes in one state and sometimes in another: *e.g.*, at one time discouraged, downcast and in despair; at another, bright, cheery and full of hope. But there is nothing to correspond even to this in God, who knows no change

or shadow of alteration, but is ever the infinitely perfect throughout all ages, times and periods. "Yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever."

Hence all that seems to imply change in the Creator must be understood to mean, in sober truth, nothing more than a change in the creature. What looks like change in God is really the simple and Divine act of omnipotence, changeless in itself, producing change in all things else. We say God loves and hates; that He is angered and pacified; now roused to indignation, now induced to relent and to pardon; that He punishes and rewards, etc. And when we hear such things said, and read such expressions in the Bible, we are sometimes apt to forget the calm, consistent and passionless nature of God "with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (Js. i. 17).

In all such cases the change which we attribute to God must really be referred to that which is external to God. In such a matter it is not easy to find an example that may fittingly illustrate our theme; but let us make an attempt. Take, as an instance, the sun shining in the heavens. The sun casts a ray of heat upon the earth: this ray is precisely the same whether it fall on one object or another. But, observe, though there may be no difference in the *ray* itself, the *effect* of that ray may be not only different, but even opposite, according to the condition, quality and character of



the object on which it falls. If it fall on a piece of wax it will soften it and make it perfectly plastic and yielding; but if it fall on a piece of soft, wet clay it will produce diametrically the opposite effect. It will harden and bake it till it breaks up and crumbles away into dust. So God, more incapable of all change than the sun's rays, by one and the same act produces the most opposite results, *e.g.*, rewards the saint and punishes the sinner.

Take another example from the order of nature. What are more dissimilar than mid-winter and mid-summer? Yet the contrast arises, not as most people would suppose, from any difference in the rays of heat falling from the sun, but solely from the difference in the angle at which the earth presents itself to those rays. If we study the seasons, for instance, in the northern hemisphere, we shall find that the earth is no nearer the sun in the heats of summer than in the frosts of winter; on the contrary, it is appreciably farther off; the difference of the seasons being due to the greater or less inclination of the earth's axis to the ecliptic, or plane in which the earth revolves around the sun. When the earth assumes a position so that the rays fall almost perpendicularly we experience the heat of summer; when it assumes a position so that these same rays fall at an acute angle we have the piercing cold of winter.



The ray, so to speak, is immutable, and the wholly opposite effects observable are owing, not to any alteration in the sun, but to an alteration on the part of the earth. The sun—a figure of God—undergoes no corresponding alteration; yet, though this great source of heat rests unaffected, the earth will enjoy summer or endure winter according to the manner in which it presents itself to the sun's glance.

These may be taken as imperfect similitudes of God's action upon different creatures. The changelessness of the ray suggests the immutability and simplicity existing on the part of God; its different effects upon different objects suggest the mutability and the varied conditions existing on the part of creatures. God is said to love one soul, and to reward it with the imperishable joys of heaven; He is said to hate another, and to pour out his wrath upon it, and to thrust it into the eternal fires of hell—and, of course, God does really detest sin and love virtue. Yet the one act and the other, though totally different so far as their effects on the two souls are concerned, are absolutely one and the same in God—and can bear no evidence of any mutability in the immutable. His act is one and the same, for the simple reason that it is Himself: He *is* His act—"actus purissimus". Yet the self-same act will produce different and even opposite effects upon unlike

objects, or upon the same object in different conditions. To illustrate this yet more fully let us make use of analogy. Instead of the soul (1) made for God, (2) made to enjoy God, and (3) to bask in the brightness of His presence, let us take the human eye (1) made for light, (2) made to enjoy light, and (3) to bask in the brightness of its presence.

Now a healthy eye, an eye which is sound and perfect, rejoices in the light. The presence of the light is a source of perennial contentment and satisfaction to it. But, suppose a change to come over this delicate organ; suppose the eye to be diseased, inflamed, injured; then, what was before a source of pleasure is changed into a source of pain, annoyance, irritation and suffering. The sore, blood-shot organ now shuns the light; its brightness becomes insupportable; the only escape from pain is in darkness. The blinds are drawn, and the shutters closed, and the rays of the sun are not allowed to fall upon the dilated pupil. Whence this difference? It is not to be found in the light itself, but in the altered state of the eye. The light is ever the same—ever pure, clear, cheery, bright, glorious; but the eye, because diseased, *because fallen from its perfect state*, now finds that to be intolerable which once was its delight, now experiences pain where it once found pleasure.

So is it, in so far as a similitude can be applied, with the soul rejoicing in heaven, and the soul tortured in hell. By the self-same act God rewards the good and punishes the bad. It is not God who has changed, it is the soul. Let us put it in another way: God is not merely good, He is infinite goodness; to the good infinite goodness will be in harmony, but goodness will never harmonise with evil. It will be in opposition with it; and if it is eternal goodness it will be in eternal opposition; and if infinite goodness it will be in infinite opposition. Thus it is the very goodness of God (this self-same immutable attribute) which, without any shadow of change, constitutes at once the heaven of the saint and the hell of the sinner. Men talk as though God had changed towards them; but it is they who have changed towards Him—in a word, it is not the light that has lost its brightness and withholds its cheering rays, it is the disease the eye has contracted which has made the presence of the self-same rays, once so delightful and joy-giving, now so agonising and intolerable.

So with regard to every Divine act *ad extra*. God seems to act differently at different times, and differently towards different persons and objects at the same time; yet faith assures us that on the part of God there is no change whatsoever, and that His state being one of infinite perfection can-

not suffer the slightest alteration. To alter would be to grow less perfect; for, being already infinite in all perfection, He cannot alter in the direction of *greater* perfection; if He alter at all, it must be in the direction of *less* perfection—which is absolutely impossible with God. “Ego Dominus et non mutor”: “I am the Lord, and I change not” (Mal. iii. 6).

When God therefore *appears* to act in an infinite variety of ways it is in reality but the one infinitely perfect act, in itself absolutely simple, which is producing innumerable different effects and manifesting itself in an infinite variety of forms.

Let us, in illustration, refer once again to the sunlight. The rays of the sun are (practically) ever the same, but see how differently they affect the different objects on which they fall; *e.g.* (*a*) we watch them fall on the ocean, and we see the waters rising by evaporation till the arching heavens are filled with clouds; (*b*) or, again, we watch them fall on the snow-capped mountains, and behold! the ice and snow melt, and the torrents are let loose, and bound down their rugged rocky beds and over the gigantic cliffs on their way to the sea with the sound of thunder; (*c*) or we see them shining upon the broad stretching plains and valleys, and at once stirring the fresh-sown seed and awakening it into life till the blades of grass appear and the soft velvety verdure spreads

itself like a carpet over the land; (*d*) or they fall on the bare corn-fields and (*e*) the leafless vineyards, and in a few months the sunlit earth smiles in golden harvests, and glows with the innumerable clusters of purple grapes.

It is the same sun, the same rays; yet how varied are the effects, according to circumstances of place, of time, and of distance! Or, to descend into minuter particulars: All colour on earth is due to the action of the sun. It is the one sun that (*f*) paints the lily, that (*g*) gilds the pistils in its chalice-cup till they look like points of burnished gold, that (*h*) lends to the heather-bell its fairy-like hues, and (*i*) makes the hawberries glow like fire in the autumn hedgerows. A single ray falls like a pure white arrow from the eastern sky, yet, seen through a prism, it seems to the observer wholly transformed and aglow with all the colours of the solar spectrum. It is red and orange, purple and violet, blue, green and gold, and changes like a witch's oils.

Throughout all these variations the ray remains unaffected. It is the same sun, the same light, the same strange power, that, falling upon different bodies, exhibits itself in such an endless variety of ways. Men ask, in their ignorance, why God changes His attitude now towards one and now towards another. But with as much reason they might ask why the sun changes its attitude to-



wards the soft damp clay, which it hardens and pulverises, and towards the hard wax, which it softens and melts like water. As well ask why the sun paints the lily white, the rose red, and the violet purple; or why it leaves the dry twig unadorned, while it clothes the lily of the field in a wealth of glory and splendour unknown to Solomon in the zenith of his power. The difference is not to be sought in the sun, but in the objects with which the sun is called upon to deal. It would be manifestly absurd to say that the sun shows partiality, or that it is differently affected towards different objects. No, the sun is the same; the source of the difference is not attributable to the glorious orb of day, but to the unlike condition of terrestrial things.

This, though necessarily an imperfect and unsatisfying illustration, is yet the best we can offer, and may help in some measure to enable us to conceive at least *what is meant* by the immutable unity of God within Himself, throughout all the changes and vicissitudes that are the result of His action upon creatures.

But if God is one in His own nature, one in the sense of being free from all complexity and multiplicity of parts and attributes and faculties, *i.e.*, the essentially simple, He is, of course, equally one in the more ordinary sense—that is to say, in the sense of being without a rival, without an equal, without any other to compare with Himself.



“See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me: I will kill and I will make to live: I will strike, and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deut. xxxii. 39).

“*I alone am.*” Compared with God, all other beings can scarcely be said to exist at all. He alone exists necessarily and essentially. He alone always was; He alone had no beginning. He alone exists of Himself. Not only is God a being above all others; He is a being so essentially apart—alone, and *sui generis*, that we cannot even compare any other to Him. No comparison is so much as possible.

If we take the tiniest atom, invisible to the naked eye, we may compare it with the bulk of the earth; nay, more, however immeasurable the difference, it is possible nevertheless to institute a comparison between it on the one hand, and the entire creation, including earth, moon, sun and stars, on the other; but it is wholly impossible to compare in any way a creature, or all creatures together, with the infinite, uncreated and ineffable being of God. He is not alone superior to all creatures, but all creatures are in His sight as though they were not. Even “existence” cannot be predicated of creatures, as it is predicated of God. In the sense in which God exists they simply do not exist at all! Though nothing that we have ever known can equal the magnificence and dazzling

grandeur of the last saint in heaven, yet the splendour and glory and beauty of all saints and angels, of cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, united and multiplied a billion times over, are less, as compared with the glory of God, than a glow-worm's spark as compared with the brilliance of the noonday's sun—and not merely less, but infinitely less. Here, surely, is food enough for a life's reflection!

Unhappily men do not think enough of the grandeur and incomparable splendour of Him who rules the world: if they did, not only would they dare not offend Him as they do, but they would rather love to lose themselves in the thought of Him and of His marvellous attributes. The pettiness of earthly gains, the poor tawdry rewards offered by the world, the hollowness and emptiness of transitory things, the foolish ambition and vain struggles for worldly honours, dignities, wealth, etc., would excite nothing but disdain, and man's one ambition and aim would be to secure possession of the infinite and the incomparable.

It would be impossible in the space at our disposal to dwell upon all the attributes into which, for the sake of clearness, we are accustomed to divide the indivisible perfection of God. But let us take one as an example of all the rest.

The omnipotence of God. God is not merely omnipotent: He is Omnipotence itself. He is

omnipotence just as He is charity, or wisdom, or sanctity: it is His very nature. His power is not acquired, as the power of an angel: it is His very being; nor is it dependent on another, as the power of a creature depends on its Creator: it is self-existent. His power is not circumscribed as the power of other beings is: it is without bound, or limit, or restriction. It is absolutely infinite. To the most powerful creatures some acts are more difficult than others; but with God there can be no "more or less" difficulty, because there is no difficulty whatsoever. To create a grain of dust or to create and people and govern a thousand worlds is equally easy to Him who can do all things by a word; to lay the glistening dew-drop in the flower cup or to fashion the fathomless sea and all it contains is equally easy to God. Difficulty is a word which has no meaning when applied to omnipotence.

He has given us some slight glimpse of His might in the visible creation. The earth on which we dwell reveals to us something of His power. The sun, shining down upon us from a distance of over 90,000,000 miles, and which is over a million times the bulk of our earth, tells us a little more; still more are we penetrated with a sense of God's power when we contemplate other planets, compared to which the sun itself is but a puny insignificant object—such as Sirius, which is calcu-

lated to be a thousand times vaster than the sun, and a million times farther off—and our knowledge will grow yet further as we advance to the consideration of those stars, so far distant that their light, though travelling 180,000 miles in one second, yet takes years to reach us; and which (though they are really vaster than the whole world) appear but as microscopic grains of untold splendour.

Yet, immense as the universe is, its creation and preservation do not exhaust the power of God; He might, did He so please, call into being a universe so vast that the present universe would only compare with it as a grain of dust to a mountain; and then a third universe bearing the same proportion to the second, as the second to the first; and so on indefinitely, and for ever. We lose ourselves in the effort to conceive it—and yet He would not exhaust His power or in any way strain it. And what we have said of size we might also say of beauty—the present beauty of creation might be doubled, and the result doubled again, and so on throughout endless ages, with a result that no imagination can picture.

But nothing can really represent to our minds the magnitude of His power. All creation babbles of it. Every object on which the eye rests points to it. But it is after all but the merest babbling, but the merest pointing. We may learn more and more of it, but an infinite distance must ever

separate us from its full realisation. To understand an infinite object supposes an infinite capacity; but the power of God is infinite; therefore, to the extent in which our minds fall short of infinitude, to the same extent must they ever fall short of realising the power of God. In fact, the created intelligence of man or an angel is not merely *far* from understanding—not merely an *immeasurable way off* understanding it, but an INFINITE way off understanding it. Yet this is the Being we set at defiance when we sin!

And what we say of His power is true of every attribute and Divine perfection. Even in heaven itself, even when illuminated by the supernatural light of eternal glory, we shall not be able to fully understand or to adequately realise the infinite perfections of God. In fact, the higher a saint is in glory, and the more exalted he is in perfection, the more fully and completely he will understand how absolutely and essentially incomprehensible God is.

Indeed, God is not incomprehensible to man only, but to *every created intelligence*, and not merely while existing in the order of nature, but even if raised to the order of grace and glory. Theologians think not merely that no created mind can fully and adequately comprehend God, but that God could not even communicate such a power of comprehension, for the same reason that He could not create an infinite being or place any



mere creature on a perfect level with Himself—which would involve a contradiction.

We shall know more of God than will satisfy us, when we get into His kingdom. Nay, we shall comprehend enough to intoxicate us with a happiness and a joy which no words can express; but we shall never, never exhaust His beauty, wisdom and magnificence, etc. His infinite perfections will ever outstrip the utmost efforts of our finite minds; and our limited capacities will never be able to encompass His Divine nature or to comprehend it adequately; will never be able, that is to say, to know Him as He knows Himself. If we could do that we should be not human, but Divine; not finite, but infinite.

Such, then, is the unity and unparalleled excellence of Him whom we adore. We have said enough to show that He is one without a rival, without a second to dispute His sovereignty; alone in the infinitude of His matchless nature. Hence the Church sings every day in the Mass: “Tu solus sanctus; Tu solus dominus; Tu solus altissimus”: “Thou *alone* art holy; thou alone art the Lord; thou alone art the Most High”.

The thought of the unrivalled majesty and omnipotence of God is most salutary. Indeed it is by musing upon such themes that we come to realise—(1) our own nothingness and insufficiency; (2) the enormity of any sin committed against



the Divine Majesty; and (3) the immeasurably greater value of the least act done for His sake than the greatest achievement performed under any other impulse.

To think seriously of the unapproachable beauty and glory of God is, indeed, to set one's very heart on fire with an insatiable longing to see the King in all His beauty and unveiled splendour.

In contemplating the life in heaven, people are too apt to set before their minds the delights of sense, the sights, the society, the heavenly music, the clarity, the agility, and the grace and perfection of outward form and colour. But all these joys, however true and intense they may be—and even they are, no doubt, intense beyond words—sink into insignificance when we come to think of the Giver. They bear no proportion to the ecstasy of delight arising from His presence. Who shall picture it? Who describe it? When we have used up every comparison, and exhausted all language, and wearied our minds in our effort to image forth some feeble reflection of His beauty, we are as far off as when we began, and, like St. Jeremias, must exclaim: "A. A. Domine, nescio loqui; puer sum!" We can only say that it is unique, unparalleled, infinite and uncreated; we know not what it is now. But, in the words of inspired wisdom, "we shall be *satisfied* when His beauty shall appear."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THOUGHTS ON THE WISDOM OF GOD.

“God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, neither is there any creature invisible in His sight; but all things are naked and open to His eyes” (Heb. iv. 12, 13).

“Deus est sui ipsius et omnium intelligibilium seu illustrabilium lucidissima, certissima, et firmissima cognitio, absque ulla ignorantia, vel obscuritate; juxta illud: *Deus lux est, et tenebræ in Eo non sunt ullæ.*”—  
LESSIUS.

**I**F the immensity of the sidereal universe and the prodigious scale of the visible creation reveal to us something of the infinite power of God, so, in like manner, the perfect order observable throughout space, and the beautiful harmony everywhere prevailing, and everywhere ever conspicuous, speak to us no less eloquently of His inscrutable wisdom. Every creature, from the greatest down to the least, bears testimony to the presence of an All-Wise as well as of an All-Powerful Ruler. Whether, with the astronomer, we contemplate the intricate motions of the heavenly bodies, through the limitless realms of space, or whether, with the physician, we consider the motions of the tiny corpuscles in the blood as they are carried along through every part of our wonderful system to build up muscle, and bone, and tissue, we shall be equally struck by the most unequivocal signs of a Divine intelligence.

Consider for a moment the heavens above. Through their ample expanse unnumbered worlds are perpetually revolving. Herschel himself counted over twenty millions in the Milky Way alone. These worlds are not only innumerable, but they are thousands of times, and in the case of many, hundreds of thousands, and even millions of times, vaster than our entire earth. Yet they are perpetually rushing through space with terrific rapidity. Each has its appointed path through the heavens; each dashes by at a lightning-like speed along the orbit marked out for it. While generations of men come and go, while nations rise and fall, these colossal worlds are ever hastening on their way, some at the rate of one thousand miles a minute, some at the rate of ten thousand miles and even much more. Yet, observe, they never collide, never break away from their prescribed limits, never swerve to right or left, but follow their proper orbit with such regularity and such precision and accuracy, that astronomers are able to predict to a nicety, to within a line, or even a fraction of a line, the spot in the heavens where they may be found fifty or a hundred years hence.

What an exhibition of Divine wisdom is here! Truly does the Psalmist remind us that "The Heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands"

(Ps. xviii.). But if we descend to earth, and contemplate the most diminutive object reposing upon its surface, the same truth is equally evident. The smallest wild flower that grows in the hedgerows is equally loud and clear in its testimony to ears that are properly attuned. Even the wild rose or the timorous violet comes before us as a perfect work of art, the product of wisdom as well as of power. Nothing but infinite wisdom could impress upon a dull particle of unconscious matter—such as is the seed of a flower—those marvellous principles of force and hidden virtue which enable it to build up and construct such beauteous forms from the elements of earth, air, water; to paint them with such fairy hues, to gild their petals till they gleam as fragments of burnished gold, and to fill their chalice-cups with a sweetness and a fragrance that scent every passing breeze. Indeed, there is nothing throughout nature that does not whisper to us of God's intelligence and wisdom. As every shell murmurs of the great sea from which it came, so every creature murmurs of the great Creator who fashioned and formed it.

In our own soul, however, we possess a more irresistible proof of God's wisdom. Our soul is intelligent, and possesses reason and the gift of judgment. Now, as no one can give what he does not possess, God could not create intelligence unless He first possessed it in an infinite

degree. The royal prophet, arguing against those who would deny the personality of God, asks very pertinently: "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? and He that formed the eye, shall He not consider?" (Ps. xciii. 9). So in a similar temper may we inquire: He that has bestowed intelligence, shall He not understand? and He that has created reason, shall He not comprehend? Evidently, if reason and intelligence exist anywhere in creation, that very fact proves incontrovertibly that they exist in the mind of the infinite Creator.

The Holy Scriptures again and again proclaim the omniscience of God. In Eccus. (xxiii. 28) we read: "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun; beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts". So, again, similar passages are to be met with in the Psalms, *e.g.*, cxxxviii.: "Thou hast known my sitting down, and my rising up; Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off: my path and my line Thou hast searched out, and Thou hast foreseen all my ways". So in Eccus. (xxxix. 24): "The works of all the flesh are before Him, and there is nothing hidden from His eyes. He seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before Him." Such quotations might be multiplied almost without limit.



Let us now enter a little more into particulars. Reason and faith teach us that the wisdom of God is infinite. If infinite it must have an infinite object. Such an object cannot, of course, be found among creatures which are essentially and necessarily limited. The only adequate object of God's knowledge and contemplation is God Himself. He knows Himself fully and exhaustively, and in a manner in which no creature knows or can ever know Him. Now observe: as every other being has sprung from Him, and is the fruit and result of His industry, it follows that in knowing Himself that He knows all else besides. Let me attempt an illustration. Thus, if I could know an acorn perfectly: if I could measure all its vital forces, and gauge all its hidden sources of energy and growth, I should then be able to understand an oak tree without ever having seen one. So only in a transcendental manner, God, understanding Himself, by the same act understands and knows all things else, all being but the effect of His power: for "all things," as St. John says, "were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made".

Perhaps we may realise this better by aid of a comparison. Take as an example some renowned painter. We steal softly into his studio: it is a Raphael, or a Rubens, or a Dominichino. We find him seated there lost in reverie, his head leaning



meditatively on his hand. He is awaiting the inspiration before he can commence his work. Around him lie his pigments, his brushes, his pallet and oils, and washes, and the untouched canvas. What is his purpose? He is about to paint an ideal figure or scene—that is to say, he is going to take the image existing in his own mind, and transfer it to the canvas. The scene or figure must, therefore, be in his own mind, and stand out clearly before him ere he can give it an external and independent existence. It must exist within, before it is possible for it to exist without, in actual colour and form. He must, in a word, engrave the image on his imagination ere he can give it any outward expression or external reality, *i.e.*, it must be known to the artist before the artist can by aid of colour and form make it known to others.

So is it, only in an infinitely higher degree, of the Divine Artist, the Artist who has painted the heavens and beautified the earth. He must have known all things, even before He made them; for He could not create till He knew, and had already determined what it was He was about to create. It was absolutely necessary that the idea, the pattern or prototype should exist within the mind of God before He could decree that it should have a real objective existence.

And here we may point out the fundamental

distinction between the wisdom of man, such as it is, and the wisdom of God. With us a thing must exist in order that we may know it; with God it is precisely the opposite. The thing must be known in order that it may exist. If it did not first exist, we could never know it; but if God did not first know it, it could never exist. In other words, our knowledge supposes the object already existing; on the other hand, the existence of any object necessarily supposes a preceding knowledge of it already in the mind of God. If any creature exists, then God must have known it before it existed, since otherwise its existence would be an impossibility.

From this it follows that God's knowledge must be coextensive with creation, *i.e.*, it must extend to every existing creature, the greatest and the smallest alike, and even to every merely possible creature likewise; for unless known to Him they could not be properly described as even "possible".

Although *we* are unable to occupy our minds with many things at the same time; though a vast multitude of distinct objects breed confusion with us, yet we must bear in mind that this fact is owing simply to our finite nature. The confusion is not a necessary condition of mind inasmuch as it is *mind*; but it is a necessary condition of mind *inasmuch as it is created, finite and circumscribed.*

It is a mere imperfection and limitation, and therefore in no way holds in respect to an infinite Mind.

God knows all truths without obscurity or confusion, and each individually as though no others existed—each as all, and all as each. What an overwhelming thought is this! Call to mind the myriads of creatures that swarm in the forest and fields, the seas and rivers, the earth and the air. Yet not a motion of the least among them, not a sensation, not a breath or a throb, not the beat of a heart, not the glance of an eye, not the tremor of a wing escapes Him. From the highest seraph in heaven down to the invisible amœba, everything is “naked and open to His eyes”. I stoop and dip my finger in a stagnant pool, and withdraw it with one small drop adhering to the tip. It is but a tiny drop. I place it beneath a powerful microscope. And behold! the drop is transformed. It has grown into a veritable ocean—a world!—a universe! What seemed so clear, and still, and void, is found to be teeming with life. Thousands, nay hundreds of thousands, of strange and uncanny forms are plunging and swimming, and hurrying to and fro, and backwards and forwards, and up and down, in this little water world. There are pursuers and pursued, devourers and devoured; there are great and small, the strong and the weak; there are births and deaths, and thrills of joy and throbs of pain, in that strange water

world. Yet there is no birth and no death, no thrill of joy or throb of pain even there—in that little universe glistening like a diamond at the end of my finger—but God knows it, and permits it, and ordains it. For His providence watches over all, and without His foreknowledge nothing either stirs, breathes, or even exists, or can exist, and if this be true of *one* drop, what of the accumulation of all drops throughout creation!

“O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!” (Rom. xi. 33). Yes! unfathomable, indeed, and unsearchable to the minds of men. That all, down to, and including, the invisible infusoria, should be clearly known to Him, and known to Him individually, is indeed marvelous. But it is an incontestable truth. We may easily convince ourselves of this by pointing out the absurdity of the opposite hypothesis.

We will, then, suppose, for the sake of argument, that among the countless myriads of creatures one single individual exists of which God knows nothing. Observe the absurd consequences that would follow:—

I. It would follow that God is not everywhere. For if He were everywhere He would be where that creature is, and would, of course, know of it. To say, therefore, that there is any creature un-

known to God would be to deny his immensity and ubiquity.

II. It would follow that the dominion of God is not infinite. For if the creature we are referring to were dependent upon God, and supported each succeeding moment by the power of God, it must be known to Him. If it be not known to Him, then it must be independent of God, self-existing and its own master, which is absurd.

III. Further, to say that any being, however contemptible, is unknown to God, is the same thing as to deny His omniscience. His knowledge would not be infinite, because it might be added to: we could add the fact of this creature's existence.

What we have laid down in regard to every creature holds equally good, of course, of every portion and element of which even the least creature is made up.

But the thought of the wisdom of God, though well calculated to fill our minds with reverence and awe, becomes especially pertinent and practical when referred to ourselves in person. Indeed it is a great aid to sanctity and perfection to try to realise God's intimate consciousness of all that goes on, even in our most secret heart of hearts, and to feel God knows us intimately, clearly, fully, exhaustively. Heart and mind are naked and open before Him. I may forget Him:



He cannot forget me. My thoughts fly by so rapidly that they almost escape me: they cannot escape Him. God's all-penetrating eye follows me wheresoever I may be. Nothing could give God a clearer or a more thorough knowledge of me than He has already.

He knows me at this moment with absolute perfection and accuracy—my thoughts, my desires, my secret aspirations. Indeed, as compared with God, I am grossly ignorant of myself. I see, but cannot explain sight. I am ignorant of how I see. I cannot understand the process. I feel, but sensation remains an insoluble mystery to me; and so of the other senses. Yet how perfectly He knows who has designed and constructed all. But more: He knows me so intimately that even my future is before Him as distinctly as my present. As He told St. Peter of his threefold sin of denial before he committed it—nay, when he declared and swore that he would rather suffer death than commit it—so could He tell me about every act and event of my future life: what I shall be thinking of, and doing, and desiring to do, each succeeding moment; not in this world alone, but in the next world also, a thousand, a million, a billion centuries hence; yea, for all eternity. Not only will He know them as they occur, but He knows them now. He knew them an eternity before I was created!



This is not all. He is fully informed not only of what I shall do and think during the endless future that awaits me beyond the grave, but He is equally fully informed as to what I would do under every imaginable and unimaginable circumstance and under every possible hypothesis.

There are, of course, an infinite number of circumstances in which I shall never really be placed, and millions upon millions of trials and temptations to which I shall never be subject; yet God knows exactly and accurately what I would do, and how I would conduct myself, were I so circumstanced, and were I so tried and tempted. And what, by way of example, I have said of myself, is true of each of the unnumbered host of angels and the countless generations of men, whether already created or yet to be created.

Nor does His knowledge end here. With equal perspicacity and exactness God knows not only every creature that now exists, or that one day will exist, but likewise the vastly larger number of merely possible creatures; *i.e.*, creatures which He might, but never will, create.

But we might go on for ever developing and extending the range of the infinite wisdom of God in its incomprehensible grandeur and perfection. Let us rather employ the space that remains in striving to draw some practical lessons.

The first effect of the consideration of God's

wisdom is to enhance our reverence and esteem of Him, and to fill our minds with a deeper sense of His immensity, His majesty and unapproachable excellence, and His infinite supremacy over all the works of His hands.

The second effect should be to produce in us a sense of the most profound humility and perfect unquestioning submission to His authority, and a ready, vivid faith in whatsoever He reveals; for what is the wisdom and knowledge of all men and angels combined compared to the wisdom and knowledge of God? As a grain of sand to a mountain; as a drop to the ocean; as the glow-worm's feeble spark to the midday splendour of the tropical sun.

A third effect is to fill the soul with a certain interior joy and gladness, peace and tranquillity. These effects will arise from the thought of God's nearness. In the hour of trial, in the day of gloom and mourning, I will remember (and be comforted by the remembrance) that God knows my trials and my sorrows, and has weighed all my temptations and difficulties; that He is a witness both of my afflictions and of my patience and resignation under them. I shall take comfort from the thought that I may address myself to Him at any time, and He will hear me; that I may speak with Him familiarly and frankly by day or night "as a friend speaketh to a friend," with-

out fear of being repulsed or misunderstood or chided.

The great misfortune, now-a-days, is that for so many men God has ceased to be a reality. Even those who believe in God's existence do so only in an abstract and unreal manner. God does not enter into their very life; the thought of Him is very seldom before them: they wholly fail to realise the awful presence of Omnipotence and Omniscience. Oh what a terrible awakening there will be some day!

Many marvellous surprises, no doubt, await us at the hour of our death; but, when we open our eyes for the first time in another world, will there be any surprise equal to that which we shall experience when we first learn how close and intimate God has been to us all our lives long? Let us resolve to think more frequently of the all-seeing and all-penetrating eye of God, and the absolute perfection with which He reads our most secret thoughts, and we shall soon grow in holiness and sanctity. It is the method prescribed by God Himself: "Walk before Me, and be perfect".

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BLESSED TRINITY REFLECTED IN MAN.

“Creatura mundi est quasi quidam liber, in quo relucet, repræsentatur, et legitur Trinitas fabricatrix secundum triplicem gradum expressionis, scilicet per modum vestigii, imaginis et similitudinis.”—STI. BONAVENTURÆ *Breviloquium*, Pars ii., cap. 12.

EVERY Catholic believes in the adorable mystery of the Blessed Trinity; that is to say, he professes his unqualified adhesion to the doctrine that there is but one God, and that in this one God there are three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Father is truly God. The Son is truly God. The Holy Ghost is truly God. Yet there is only one God. The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. Yet each possesses the same indivisible nature.

This is a mystery. In other words, it is above and beyond the uttermost reach of our limited capacities. Nor should this be a matter of surprise, since all our powers, both intellectual and sensitive, are circumscribed.

We can hear, but only within a certain distance; the farther off is the sound, the fainter and feebler it grows, till at last it becomes absolutely inaudible. Yet we do not deny the existence of sounds be-

cause they transcend our power of hearing. Who, while sailing over some broad expanse of water, has not noticed on the distant shore the intermittent puffs of filmy white steam ejected by some hurrying engine? We catch occasional glimpses of the train as it dashes through the rocky cutting, or over the iron bridge. Our ears can hear no sound at such a distance. We listen attentively, but our sense of hearing gives no report. The flies buzzing about our head are less inaudible. Yet we know, as a matter of fact, that the great powerful engine is rushing along with a tremendous rattle and clatter over the metal bridges, and clanging and booming like thunder as it goes, only we have not a sense acute enough to detect it at such a distance.

So is it with regard to sight. We see, but only within narrow limits, and under restrictive conditions. We can gaze upon the distant mountain, but we cannot see a vestige of the town or village nestling in the valley on the opposite side, because vision depends upon light, and light travels only in straight lines; or, again, we rivet our gaze upon a drop of stagnant water, and can detect no impurities within it; while, in sober truth, it may be the home and happy hunting-ground of, not merely hundreds, but of millions of living and moving infusoria and animalcula. It is true that it is impossible for us to see the village in the valley, and



the animalcula in the rain-drop, yet it would be most unreasonable to deny either the one or the other solely because, with all our pains, we fail to detect their presence. Once we confess our hearing and our eyesight limited, we are compelled to admit that there may be an innumerable number of objects existing which we have never heard or seen, and of the nature of which we have no suspicion.

Now what is true of the corporal eye is equally true of the mind's eye. We possess intellect. It is a great gift of God, but its capacity falls far short of infinitude. Like the bodily eye, it is limited, and can range only a certain distance. It has its own well-defined horizon, beyond which it cannot trespass. We can understand many things; but of an infinitely larger number of things we know absolutely nothing. The nature and attributes of God, for example, no created intelligence can ever hope fully to fathom. To deny their truth, however, because our minds cannot fathom it, is as foolish as to deny the sounds that we cannot hear, or the sights that we cannot see.

Though the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is, as we have already remarked, above reason, it is not contrary to reason. For, observe, we are not taught that three Gods are but one God, nor that one Person is three Persons, but that three Persons are but one God.



But if Father, Son and Holy Ghost are all one and the same God, how are we to distinguish between them? How shall we know one from another when all are essentially one and the same substance? If the one is and has all that the other is and has, how comes it that one is not the other? We answer: the Father is not the Son, because He gives birth to another, but is not born Himself. The Son is not the Father, because, though He Himself is born, He gives birth to no other. The Holy Ghost is distinct from the Father, for He does not give birth to a Son; and He is distinct from the Son because He is not *born* of the Father, but *proceeds* from the Father and the Son. He has no Son, so He is not the Father. He has no Father, so He is not the Son. He is produced by both Father and Son, therefore He is distinct from the one and the other; for that which is produced is distinct (at least so far as relation is concerned) from that which produces.

Let us now come to the purpose of this chapter, and speak of the reflection of this stupendous mystery in the person of man.

Though nothing in creation can ever explain the inexplicable, or clear away the mystery of the being of God, yet it has pleased His Divine Majesty to leave traces of His triune nature even on creatures; and if on all creatures, then especially on man. In the very opening chapter of Genesis it is narrated

that God said: "Let us make man to Our own image and likeness". "Let *Us*": by the plural form "Us" is indicated the plurality of Divine persons. By the singular form "image" and "likeness" (not "images" and "likenesses") is indicated the unity of the Divine nature. So also "*Our* image" is the expression used, and not "*My* image," to show the plurality of the persons; and "*Our image*," and not "*Our images*," to show the unity of essence.

The English catechism asks: "Is this image in your body or in your soul?" and the child is made to answer: "This likeness is *chiefly* in my soul"; by which it would seem to imply that it exists, at least in some measure, in the body. Let us consider this resemblance first, as being the least important.

Recalling to mind the history of man's creation in the Garden of Paradise, we find that God (1) first created Adam. Adam, consequently, possessed neither father nor mother, and existed without any human predecessor. In this respect he resembled the Eternal Father; the first Person of the Blessed Trinity, who is born of none, and proceeds from none. When Adam had been created (2) God then proceeded to create the second person of the human family, *i.e.*, Eve. But He did not fashion her in the same manner as He fashioned Adam—that is to say, directly

from *the slime* of the earth. He formed her out of Adam. "The Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam, and, when he was fast asleep, He took one of his ribs and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which He took from Adam into a woman" (Gen. ii. 21, 22). And Adam, seeing her, recognised whence she had come, and, addressing her, exclaimed: "This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh".

In the person of Eve we have an image and likeness of the Eternal Son. As the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is born from the First Divine Person, and from no other, so the second person of the human family, Eve, is born from the first human person, and from no other, *i.e.*, Eve is made from Adam. And (3) when God imposed upon Adam and Eve the command to increase and multiply and fill the earth, He at the same time gave them power to engender and bring forth children, but only conjointly and by their united action. Hence we read in the fourth chapter that Cain was born, and then Abel and others. Now, the children, the fruit of the first marriage instituted and blessed by God, are a figure or image of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. As they were the descendants not of Adam alone, or of Eve alone, but of both Adam and Eve, they image forth the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who proceeds

from both the Father and the Son. So, again, just as Adam and Eve and their offspring were all of the same human race and of the same nature, so this unity of nature is at once seen to be a reflection—a very imperfect one, it is true, but yet a reflection—of the unity of nature in the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity. This was a very special way of introducing the human family into being, and must have been wholly exceptional, since we nowhere read of God adopting any similar system in regard to the lower order of creatures, so that it was evidently intended to convey a special meaning.

The image of the Trinity, thus dimly reflected even in the bodily relations of the race, grows stronger and more clearly defined as we leave the material and rise to the contemplation of the spiritual side of man's nature, *i.e.*, his immortal soul. In point of fact, the image and likeness of God is chiefly in the soul. This likeness has been variously explained and elucidated by different authorities. We will express and simplify, so far as is possible, in our own words, the explanation which seems to us the most natural and obvious, which we take to be that of St. Augustine.<sup>1</sup>

The soul of a man is a simple spiritual substance, and, inasmuch as it is free from all material parts or organs, it is a most fitting and beautiful

<sup>1</sup> See *De Civitate Dei*.

image of the Divine unity of God's nature. But while it resembles the unity of God when considered under one aspect, under another aspect it also suggests and represents the Trinity of God. Thus:—

A. *Resemblance to the Father.*—In every human soul we find existence, knowledge and love. The very first thing that we can so much as conceive regarding the soul is that it exists. The soul, unlike the body, is not born of the substance of the parent, but owes its existence directly and exclusively to God. So far, therefore, as its relation to its own species, *i.e.*, to man, is concerned, it comes from none. It is without father or mother. It thus resembles the Eternal Father, who receives His substance from no other.

B. *Resemblance to the Son.*—The soul, however, not merely exists, as the earth and sea exist, but it is aware of its existence, and is conscious of its own being. That is to say, *existence gives birth to self-knowledge*. Hence we have the single and indivisible soul in two different and perfectly distinct relations, *viz.*, the soul knowing, and the soul known; the soul contemplating, and the soul contemplated; the soul as subject, and the soul as object. The self-knowledge which springs forth, or is generated from its existence, is a figure of the Second Divine Person, who is born, or springs forth, or is generated from the Father. And



further: as in the Blessed Trinity the Father is God, and the Son is God, and yet there are not two Gods, so in man, that which contemplates is the soul, and that which is contemplated is the soul; yet there are not two souls, but one only soul, which is at once the subject knowing and the object known.

C. *Resemblance to the Holy Ghost.*—But this is not all. The soul not merely exists, nor does it merely know that it exists; for this very knowledge in its turn gives rise to love. It knows itself, and at once it is drawn to love what it knows. This love, which proceeds from the existing soul contemplating its own existence, is a figure or image of the Holy Ghost. Take a concrete example. A man contemplates himself; as a consequence of this contemplation he knows himself, and his knowledge breeds within him a love of himself.

What contemplates? The soul.

What is the object contemplated? The soul.

What is that which loves? The soul.

Then, are there three souls? No; they are all one and the same soul. Although existence is not the same thing as knowledge, and though knowledge is not the same thing as love, yet it is the very self-same, indivisible soul that (1) exists, that (2) knows, and that (3) loves. So that there are not three souls, but one only. Here, then, we have a distinction of relation, and yet a unity of



nature, within the soul of every man, whereby we may trace, however dimly, the image of the Trinity in ourselves.

And observe, there is not only this threefold distinction in the soul, reflecting the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity, but, what is perhaps still more remarkable, there is also a reflection of their mutual relations and interdependence. The Father does not spring from the Son, but the Son from the Father. So in the soul; existence does not spring from knowledge, but knowledge from existence: I must exist *before* I can possibly know myself. So, again, if I existed—and, like a tree or a rock, did not know that I existed—I could not elicit an act of love. The love of myself is dependent upon two conditions: I must, *firstly*, exist, and I must, *secondly*, know that I exist before I can by any possibility experience the sensation of love. This third act, therefore, like the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, proceeds from the First and Second, and not from either, if taken singly.

If we now pass on to the consideration of human action, *ad extra*, we may trace the image of the Blessed Trinity a step farther. Theologians teach that whatsoever exists in creation is the work of the Three Divine Persons, and that every action of Almighty God upon the world of matter or of spirit is an effect of the united co-operation of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Let us, then, here observe that similarly every act of man, *qua* man, is an effect of the co-operative exercise of his three great faculties—knowledge, power, will. Although knowledge is distinct from power, and power is distinct from will, and will is distinct from knowledge, still all three faculties are invariably called into play when a human act is performed. So essentially united are all these three powers, indeed, that to eliminate or arrest the influence of any one of them would be to effectually arrest the act itself.

Take the simplest illustration. Suppose it is a question of communicating a piece of news. Here three conditions must be realised. Firstly, I must *know* what it is that I am going to enunciate. Secondly, I must possess the *power* of representing my knowledge so that it may be understood by others—*i.e.*, I must be able to clothe my thoughts in words or signs expressive of my ideas; and, thirdly, I must possess the *will*—*i.e.*, I must have the intention and the desire to exercise my power of speech, since (*a*) to possess knowledge, and (*b*) the power of communicating it, without the (*c*) will, would be wholly nugatory.

Or, take a somewhat different example. An artist is about to produce a picture. Before a line of it can be drawn three wholly distinct, but intimately connected conditions, must be realised. He must possess within his own mind the idea or

scene before he can depict it on the canvas. Secondly, he must possess power to express this idea or scene; that is to say, he must have the ability so to guide his brush and to lay on pigments, as to reproduce externally the inward conception of his mind. But, though these two conditions are of the most absolute necessity, they will not, of themselves, suffice. A third condition is essential before the act can be performed and the scene or image painted; and that is, that the artist wills to exert his faculties for its production. It is only when knowledge, power and will combine in one united effort that any result may be hoped for, or is even possible. This Trinity within the soul of man co-operates in every single act that man consciously performs. In fact, destroy knowledge, then power and will remain at a standstill. Destroy power, then knowledge and will become useless. Destroy will, then power and knowledge must for ever remain inoperative.

All three are indispensable, and no more than these three are requisite to produce the particular effect, whatever that effect may be. Thus, though power, knowledge and will are all distinct, yet they unite so as to produce one indivisible act.

In this manner, faintly and feebly, yet very truly we may trace the image of the Adorable Trinity in every action which we consciously perform. As every creative act is the work of the Three Divine

Persons; as every *opus ad extra* is *per ipsum, i.e.*, by the power of the Father; *cum ipso, i.e.*, through the Wisdom of the Son; and *in ipso, i.e.*, in virtue of the Will of the Holy Spirit, so every human act is the work of the three faculties of the one human soul; so that every human achievement is produced by means of the *power* of man, through the *knowledge* of man, and in virtue of the *deliberate will* of man.

In His infinite goodness God has destined us to be eternally happy with Him amid the untold and unimagined splendours of heaven. He is our Father, and we are His children; and, as even an earthly parent loves to see his own character and likeness reflected in his offspring, so does God wish to see some trace of His own infinite and ineffable beauty reflected in us.

God Himself laid the foundations of this resemblance in the very moment of creation, and rendered it yet more close when we were regenerated in holy Baptism. It only remains for us now to fill in the picture, and (in so far as human frailty will permit) to increase and intensify the likeness by the practice of virtue and perfection. "Be ye perfect," says our Divine Master, "as your heavenly Father is perfect." We must, consequently, seek, according to the measure of our weakness, to clothe ourselves with the virtues and perfec-

tions of the Deity, and to realise all that our position in creation imposes upon us.

There is no honour so great, no dignity, no privilege, no benefit so exalted as that of being, by adoption, the children of God, and, by grace, participators even of the Divine nature. What a thrill of joy and gratitude should pass through our heart of hearts when we call to mind that we are not, like the plants and trees, mere growing things; nor, like the birds and beasts of the forest, mere sensitive and living organisms, but the rational and conscious sons of God.

What an exquisite delight to know and to feel, with all the certainty of Divine faith, that beneath this perishable vesture of vile clay—this earthly garment of flesh and blood—there dwells an immortal and imperishable soul, made to the very image and likeness of the eternal, uncreated and infinite Beauty! All else passes. That—whether for our greater glory or for our greater ignominy—remains. The body will grow decrepit and decay. Time will plough deep furrows in the face. The eyes will become dim and sightless, and the footsteps faltering and slow. The hair will turn white as winter's frost, and at last the house of clay will totter and crumble to pieces and mingle with the dust. But as a granite rock in the midst of some mighty river rests unmoved and immovable when all around is rushing and



whirling by, so the soul remains when all else disappears. Nations, like the leaves, have their time to fall. People vanish, and races become extinct. The earth itself shall be burnt up by fire, and the starry lamps now glowing in the midnight sky shall be put out; but the soul knows no decay, no dissolution, no death.

The stars shall fade away; the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;  
But THOU shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.

To what conclusion does this lead us? Well, if we are made for eternity, let us live for eternity and work for eternity, and not waste our energies and spend our strength on the trumpery things of time. No one balancing the relative claims of time and of eternity, and realising, however faintly, the contrast between the two terms, would or could give himself up to the frivolities, petty ambitions and empty honours of a tottering and fast-decaying world.



## CHAPTER VI.

### VESTIGES OF THE BLESSED TRINITY IN IRRATIONAL CREATURES.

“In creaturis omnibus invenitur repræsentatio Trinitatis per modum vestigii; in quantum in qualibet creatura inveniuntur aliqua quæ necesse est reducere in divinas Personas, sicut in causam.”—ST. TH., i., q. 45, a. 7.

“IN all creatures,” says St. Thomas of Aquin, “is found impressed a likeness to the Trinity, in the sense that we find in every creature things which lead us to the Divine Persons as their cause. For every creature subsists in its individual being (*esse*); has a form which determines its species, and has relations to something else” (St. Th., q. 45, a. 7).

St. Augustine refers to the same truth when he remarks, in the sixth book of his *Treatise on the Trinity*, “Recognising the Creator by means of the things which are created (Rom. i. 20), we ought also to understand the existence of a Trinity, of which every creature, as far as it is worthy to do so, bears the impress”.

We have already considered man as the image and likeness of God. We have already pointed out how he reflects in his soul, and to some extent even in his body, the mystery of the adorable Trinity. We will now pass from the consideration

of men to the contemplation of the rest of the visible universe, and see if we cannot discover some traces of God's uncreated beauty, even in the material and perishable objects about us.

I look out over the far-stretching earth. I gaze in dreamy wonder at the sun and stars, and the fathomless interstellar spaces. I contemplate the gigantic mountains crowned with eternal snows; the warm southern seas, blue as the heatherbell, extending to endless distances; the leafy forests, the fields of golden corn, the meadowland and fruity orchards; or I plunge into the shadowy summer woods, and roam among the branching trees till my senses become enthralled by the infinite variety of their types and textures. The wild flowers, with their wealth of colouring and endless diversity of form, enchant my eye; and while I am yet dazzled by the brilliance of the jewelled wing of some wandering butterfly, the gladsome notes of a joyous bird startle the solemn silence of the scene.

As I contemplate the countless myriads of objects, I call to mind that one and all are the effects of a supreme Cause, and that the most minute, as well as the most vast, has been formed and fashioned by the simple *fiat* of the one infinite and triune God.

And knowing God to be the author of all, I shall naturally expect to detect in them at least

some slight traces of His hands. We shall not expect, of course, to behold God's image reflected as faithfully in what is material and perishable as in what is spiritual and supernatural. Nevertheless, just as the image of God is indelibly impressed on the soul, so we are reasonably led to infer that, in a less perfect and more shadowy way, some vestige of that image may also be discovered by the thoughtful student everywhere throughout the whole expanse of creation.

We shall be prepared to find the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, at least in dim outline, written large across the whole face of nature. We shall expect to find all things constructed and built up with a view to unity and trinity. We shall expect to find, in the first place, a threefold division bound together in some form of unity, and, in the second place, a unity falling away into a threefold division—that is to say, one, when considered from one point of view, and three, when considered from another point of view.

Let us begin with the widest and most general conception, that of Creation. "The Creation" embraces in a single word whatever God's hands have made, and includes every being that is not Himself. Yet this prodigious multitude of different entities falls naturally into three (and only three) great categories. Every object in creation must range itself under one of these three heads:

(1) the wholly spiritual, (2) the wholly material, or (3) the mixed (that in which the spiritual and the material are combined to produce one single suppositum)—*e.g.*, Man. In other words, three distinct and wholly unlike worlds are included in the one creation: the material world, which includes the whole physical universe; the purely spiritual world, which includes all the angelic hosts, the good and the evil spirits; and, thirdly, that world which is in part spiritual and in part material—the human race, each member of which rejoices in a material body and a spiritual soul. Thus all finite things, though forming one vast creation, are yet separated into three great divisions.<sup>1</sup>

If we pass on to consider some of the circumstances—the *necessary* circumstances—of existence, we shall find that the shadow of the Trinity still encompasses it. For example, it is not a mere accident, but a positive necessity, that creatures should exist *in Time*. So soon as the first creature begins to exist, Time dawns. Every creature becomes subject to the laws of Time, and is bound by them as by chains of iron. But Time, like the Trinity, has three necessary relations: it is (*a*) past, (*b*) present, and (*c*) future. Observe, this is not in any sense an arbitrary division, but one which is inherent in the very nature of time. Try to separate time into a greater or less number of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* "Die Schöpfungslehre," von Dr. J. Oswald, 1885.

divisions. You cannot. All time must be either time past, or time present, or time to come. No man can so much as conceive a fourth kind of time, nor can any one reduce the three divisions to a lesser number. We cannot think of time except as past, present and future; and yet time embraces *every* object on earth in its relentless grasp. Furthermore, as the Son is born of the Father only, whereas the Holy Ghost proceeds from Father and Son, so the *present* is born of the past only, whereas the *future* proceeds from past and present.

Or, instead of existence in general, take a special form of existence, *viz.*, life. In this, also, we shall find the idea of the Trinity clearly expressed. God has endowed a vast number of creatures with life. Life is enjoyed by trees, shrubs, flowers—*i.e.*, *vegetative* life. Life is also a possession of insects, birds, animals—*i.e.*, *sensitive* life; and life also falls to the share of man's immortal soul, which, in common with angels and archangels, lives a *rational* and *intellectual* life. Here, then, we notice that all life breaks up into three divisions, and no more. And again let me call attention to the fact that this is no arbitrary division, but one existing in nature itself; a division not due to the fancy of a man, who is seeking to build up a theory, but due to the action of God alone.

Now, descending to the lowest form of life, we



shall find that it also encloses a threefold condition of being. A plant exists under three distinct forms before it completes the full cycle of its being. First there is the seed or fruit; secondly there is the green stalk or trunk of whatever species it may be; and thirdly there is the flower. So soon as the flower is full-blown and departs, we again reach the seed, and then begins the cycle over again: (1) seed, (2) stalk or trunk, (3) flower, in one continuously recurring series.

If from the lowest form of life we ascend to the highest—*i.e.*, rational life—a similar phenomenon is observable. The soul must, as the shrub, pass through three progressive stages before attaining its fullest possible development, and the final purpose of its creation. It starts with the life of simple natural intelligence. Then by baptism it advances to the higher life of Divine grace; and finally, if it persevere, it ends by attaining a life of eternal glory in heaven. It is from first to last precisely one and the same soul, yet at each stage in its wonderful career it enjoys a totally different and wholly superior form of life. The man who enjoys the life of nature remains the same individual when, by baptism, he begins to live the life of grace, and the same still when he comes to live the life of glory. The unity of the individual, and the trinity of life that he leads, recalls the unity and the trinity in God. Thus we have nature,



grace and glory in the one soul of man, and Father, Son and Holy Ghost in the one substance of God. Grace presupposes and (chronologically) follows nature;<sup>1</sup> glory presupposes nature as well as grace, and proceeds from both (from nature as a necessary condition, and from grace as an efficient cause), and so the soul, "born again" to the life of grace, suggests the birth of the Son from the Father only, and the sanctified soul lifted up, through grace, to the life of glory in Heaven suggests the procession of the Holy Ghost from Father *and* Son.

The farther we extend our investigations the more struck we shall be by the marvellous manner in which vestiges of the Trinity are discernible in every part of the measureless creation; even in the commonest objects on which our eyes can rest. It might seem difficult at first glance to discover any resemblance to the triune nature of God—say, for example, in such familiar things as rocks, mountains, seas, lakes, etc. Yet even in all these there is much to suggest it.

Thus we notice that all material things are bound on every side by lines; in fact, it is these lines which determine their form and appearance. Everything has a certain definite outline. But lines are capable of only three possible arrange-

<sup>1</sup> Normally, though not of course necessarily—*e.g.*, we have an exception in the case of the Blessed Virgin.

ments, and every created form must be contained in space by one of these three, as it must be contained in time by one of the three divisions of duration.

Let us consider these three arrangements.

First there is the simple straight line.

Secondly there are a series of simple lines arranged so as to produce a surface.

Thirdly there are a combination of surfaces so arranged as to produce a solid.

Now every object in the whole visible universe is in form (*a*) a line, or combination of lines; (*b*) a surface, or a combination of surfaces; or (*c*) a solid or combination of solids. In this respect every extended substance falls under a triple division.

But what is still more singular, each of these three terms is itself made up of a unity and trinity.

A mathematical straight line, though one, possesses three distinct yet essential parts—*i.e.*, the beginning, the end and their connection. We cannot even conceive an actual straight line without these three necessary parts. There must be a point from which the line starts, and a point at which it terminates, and a space between. For were there no space between there would be no line, as one point would be identical with the other.

The same shadow of the Trinity may be found also in surfaces. Every surface is contained by

three lines (or by combinations of three). The simplest form of surface that we can imagine is a triangle, and that demands, as an absolute condition of its existence, at least three lines. It is impossible to find in the whole realm of nature any surface whatsoever with less than three sides, for with less than three we cannot enclose a space. As God necessarily contains three persons, so a line necessarily contains three parts; and a surface necessarily contains three lines. If we examine any rectilinear figure we please, we shall find that it is either a triangle, or, at all events, a compound of two or more triangles. A square, for example, or any other form of parallelogram, is nothing more than two triangles laid one against the other. Take this printed page. Draw an imaginary line from one corner to the opposite, and it at once becomes evident that it is in reality but the union of two complete triangles. If we examine a pentagon, we shall find that it is but a cluster of three triangles; a hexagon a cluster of four triangles; a heptagon a cluster of five; and so on, no matter what may be the number or even the relative length of the lines which the figure contains. The most complicated form will ever be found to be in simple truth but a conglomeration of triangles.

Now let us pass from mere surfaces to solids. A solid is necessarily of three dimensions. Every

solid body is made up of three, and only three, *viz.*, length, breadth and thickness. There is no material object in the whole world which is not contained by these three—they cover all conceivable things from the vastest sun to the smallest grain of sand. As we cannot conceive any visible object possessing less than these three dimensions, so neither can we conceive any object possessing more than three. A fourth dimension is unthinkable; and a material entity with less than three is equally so.

Thus vestiges of the Trinity follow and pursue us wherever we direct our investigations. We will now consider if any additional traces of the Trinity can be discovered in stones and metals, and in the waters of oceans, lakes and rivers. Let us commence with the commonest of all objects, *viz.*, water. Water covers nearly two-thirds of the entire earth, and is marked by most distinct traces of the Trinity. The substance of God is one, but this Divine substance is terminated in the three Persons, so that each is a distinct suppositum. So the substance of water is one, yet it is found to possess three different states of being. It may exist in the form of ice, hard and rigid as marble; it may exist in its ordinary condition, soft and yielding, as in a summer sea; and, thirdly, it may, by the application of great heat, assume the form of invisible steam, rising into the higher regions of the atmosphere.

It may change from one condition to the other and back again, but within the limits of these three it must ever remain.

And what we have pointed out in the case of water may be said with equal truth of all metals, such as iron, copper, gold, silver, lead, etc. They one and all are capable of existing in three distinct states: firstly, hard and solid as we generally see them; secondly, liquid, as when melted down in the furnace; and, thirdly, in the form of gas or vapour. Man may not have power to apply heat of sufficient fierceness and intensity to vaporise all metals, but where such a terrifically high temperature is attained, as, for example, in the sun, even the most stubborn metals may be reduced to a gaseous state. The degree of heat present in the photospheres of the stars, for instance, is sufficient (so Lockyer tells us) to vaporise magnesium, sodium, iron, barium, etc. Indeed, copper and zinc and other substances have actually been detected in a vaporous state in the sun. And, given a sufficiently high temperature, probably all earthly substances might be reduced to a liquid and to a gaseous state. Was not the entire earth once but a gas cloud? This is certainly the teaching of many scientists.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we have an end-

<sup>1</sup> "At first the masses (composing the solar system, with its planets and moons, etc.) were an incandescent gas, and then an incandescent liquid" (see *A Christian Apology*, pp. 236-7, vol. i. By Paul Schanz, D.D., D.Ph.).



less variety of substances, each possessing its own nature and characteristics, yet capable of existing in three totally different forms—solid, liquid or gaseous. Except in one of these states we cannot imagine them; yet we have no difficulty in admitting that they may exist indifferently in any one of the three.

Let us now turn to a somewhat different object—the sun. The great orb of day is often referred to as an image of God. It is the sun that brightens, cheers and gladdens the heart, and makes life possible to man and beast. It is the sun that at its rising calls man to labour, and that transforms the earth from darkness into light and beauty. But if we study it somewhat more carefully, we shall find that it, like all else, combines a trinity of operation with its unity of substance. The sun is one, but its functions are threefold. In order to illustrate this, let us arrest one of its golden rays after traversing some ninety-three millions of miles to our earth, and see what it reveals. That simple ray is indeed a most exquisite figure of the triune nature of God. In one God there are three Persons; in one ray there are three principles. What are they? Well, examine the ray and we shall see.

Suppose I am a prisoner in a lonely dungeon and I watch a beam of golden splendour penetrating into my dark and dismal cell.



My eye will at once recognise in it (1) a *principle of light*. It scatters darkness from its path, and wherever it falls it brings light and brightness. But this is not all. My eye perceives that it brings not only light but also colour. It paints the rose red and the lily white; it adorns the opening daisy and adds a thousand tints to the violet. It would take up too much space to explain this fully now, but any one studying the matter will find that the sun, beside being a principle of light, is also (2) a *principle*, or at least a condition, *of colour*. The sun, indeed, is the greatest and cleverest of artists. Who, indeed, can paint with such consummate skill or with such a delicate touch? And what is the third principle? I extend my shivering manacled hand and let the wandering ray fall upon it, and immediately I experience a sense of genial warmth. And even though I close my eyes and so cut off all perception of light and of colour, I still continue to enjoy the pleasing glow. It is therefore (3) a *principle of heat* as well as of light and colour. The one sun represents the one God; its threefold operation the three Divine Persons.

Nor need we stop here. If we now transfer our attention to each of these properties, or principles, existing in the one ray of light, we can easily convince ourselves that each, in its turn, contains a still further image of the Trinity. It would take

too much space to explain this in all three cases, so, omitting all further reference to light and heat, let us trace this image in the laws of colour.

What a beautiful thing is colour! Nothing is so varied, so rich, so ethereal as the colouring in nature. Every species of flower seems to hoist its own flag. Every kind of fruit seems to blush in its own inimitable manner. The infinite number of different shades and tints, even of the same colour, almost surpasses computation. Besides the vegetable kingdom, call to mind the untold myriads of insects—especially tropical flies, moths, butterflies and beetles—with wings encrustated, as it were, with gems and precious stones that glance and sparkle in a thousand gorgeous and brilliant dyes. At first sight colour seems to be far too complicated to reflect the triune nature of God. A closer and more accurate observation, however, will reveal to us that all these infinite varieties of colour are reducible to three; and that these three are contained in a single ray of sunshine.

A single ray of pure white light falling on a prism will break up into three clear and simple colours. We are not, of course, forgetting that there are seven so-called colours in the solar spectrum. But there are *only three primary or radical colours*. The other four are but complementary, and are formed by these three flowing

together at the lines of contact and mingling in different proportions.<sup>1</sup> All, or almost all, scientists agree that there are but three elementary colours, and that all the rest are but combinations of these three as they mingle in different degrees and intensity.

The original ray is white, and that may be taken as a figure of the unity of nature in God. It is resolvable into three primary colours, however, which may well suggest the trinity of persons. And as every object in existence is the work of the three Divine Persons, so every colour and hue and shade visible to human eye is the work, if we may so express it, of the three primary colours, since it is formed by a combination of them in varying proportions. To these *three* colours indeed is due every entrancing effect of golden sunset, every gem of "ray divine," every gleam of fascinating loveliness.

All the most exquisite scenes conjured forth by the painter's brush, every fairy-like view in forest, field, mountain, sky or sea, so far as the harmony and variety of the colouring are concerned, owe their existence to this wonderful trio. Hence we may declare with truth that over all that is fairest

<sup>1</sup> Even two parallel lines of wet paint, one *blue* and the other *yellow*, will be found to produce a *green* line at the points of contact. This example, though not *altogether* applicable, will serve to illustrate our meaning.

and comeliest in the regions of light this trinity of colour throws its magic spell.

There is some dispute, it would seem, as to which are the three primary colours, but that three alone exist is generally, if not universally, admitted.

We may here observe, too, that though the three fundamental colours dissolve in the unity of white light, yet that they coalesce in such a manner that each of the three preserves its distinctive attribute. Red is the caloric, yellow (or emerald green) the luminous, and blue the chemical (actinic) ray.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The employment of an impure spectrum, *i.e.*, one mixed with white light, and some misunderstood experiments with absorptive coloured media, induced Sir David Brewster to propound the theory in his work on 'Optics,' in *Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia* (pp. 72 *et seq.*), that white light has in reality but three primary constituents—red, yellow and blue. He announced this in the work just cited as an original and independent discovery; but he had been long anticipated in his doctrine of the triune character of light, first by Wunsch, at Leipzig, in 1792, and not long subsequently, at the beginning of the present century, by that truly great philosopher and physicist, Thomas Young, in this country. Nay, more; so far from Brewster having made a discovery, he absolutely enunciated an erroneous doctrine, and took a retrograde step in comparison with those of his predecessors. It is quite true that the light of the sun, as it reaches us, is compounded of three colours, and of three only, but unfortunately two out of Brewster's three colours happen to be the wrong ones! For while it is the veriest truism to assert that blue and yellow paint mixed together form green, no such result can be predicated of the mixture of blue and yellow light, which mixture, so far from being green, is white. These colours are, in fact, complementary to each other. The three primitive colours are a scarlet red, emerald green and violet blue or blue violet" (see *Knowledge*, Jan., 1886, p. 95).

If it is permissible to follow this analogy out further, we should say that the caloric ray evidently corresponds to the Father, the warm source of light; the luminous ray to the Son, the Light of the world; and the chemical ray to the Spirit, which pierces into the innermost recesses of the heart, and imbues it with peculiar qualities and forces. One of the instances given by Woodward is very suggestive. Some plants (cucumbers and melons) were put under a glass, which was so coloured as to absorb the blue (chemical) rays of light. The consequence was that the plants grew with the greatest rapidity, and put forth luxuriant blossoms, but just as quickly they faded away again without bringing forth fruit. Does not this look like a physical reflection of the Christian precept, "Quench not the Spirit" (Thes. v. 19), because without Him no real fruit can ripen?

What has been said of colour may be applied also to sound. "The kingdom of sound," remarks Theodore Christlieb, D.D., "is governed by the triad as the basis of all chords; nor does this destroy the original unity of the keynote, but, on the contrary, makes it an organised unity embracing multiplicity."<sup>1</sup> So, again, in each note of music there are three distinct qualities, *viz.*, (1) the strength or intensity, (2) the pitch, and (3) the quality (*timbre*).

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 277.

We may also remark that every-material thing exists (1) in time, (2) in space, (3) and in motion; and just as time and space, as we have already seen, are terms of triple aspect, so motion embraces three relations: (1) direction, (2) distance, (3) velocity.

Many further objects might be selected to illustrate the truth of our contention; but perhaps more than enough has been said to prove how wondrously even the soulless and senseless creation reflects back the image of its great Fashioner. If we may catch such glimpses, even in our present condition of comparative ignorance, who shall say what a magnificent picture of God the visible creation will present to us, when we can contemplate it from the other side of the veil?



*PART THE SECOND.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### THOUGHTS ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

“What is meant by saying that God is infinite? We seem to wish to be told, as if we had nothing given us to throw light on the question. The outward exhibition of infinitude is mystery; and the mysteries of nature and grace are nothing else than the mode in which His infinitude encounters us and is brought home to our minds. Men confess that He is infinite, yet they start and object as soon as His infinitude comes in contact with their imagination.”—CARD. NEWMAN, *Serm. to Mixed Cong.*

THERE is scarcely any doctrine so beautiful or so consoling as the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist. It is the central dogma of our religion and the very focus of Divine love. When, indeed, we think of the excellence and the grandeur of this dogma, we are appalled at the large number of Christians who refuse to accept its truth, and instinctively ask ourselves why it is that so many, in most respects good and honest men, reject and denounce it with so much vehemence. Is it because such a doctrine finds no support in the pages of holy writ? No; that cannot be, for it is clearly and unmistakably laid down there in many noticeable passages; so clearly, indeed, that men are compelled to use violence, and to twist, contort and torture the obvious meaning of simple phrases in their vain efforts to escape from the Catholic interpretation.

Is it, then, because it was not taught in the early Church, nor countenanced by the Fathers and teachers of the first few centuries? Impossible. For history informs us that it was explicitly and emphatically taught in the Church from the very beginning, and not only taught, but, what is much more worthy of observation, taught *without a dissentient voice* for many long and eventful ages. It was not until the eleventh century that it met with any serious opposition. The famous Berengarius, Archdeacon of Angers, opposed it about the year 1050; but the Church, spread throughout the world, arose as one man and condemned him; while council after council solemnly denounced his assertion as heretical. After much controversy he renounced his error, and returned once more to the faith of his baptism.

If, then, both Scripture and tradition assert so unmistakably the truth of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, why do so many thousands of earnest Protestants deny it? They may assign various reasons, but if we analyse their statements and weigh their motives, I suspect that we shall find that the real secret of their repugnance to the doctrine lies precisely in its mysteriousness. They repudiate it because it is in itself so marvellous, so utterly unintelligible to the mind, and so brimming over with unfathomable difficulties. Men brought up on the principle

of "private judgment" and "the open Bible interpreted by each individual," are startled and thrown back when they consider the literal meaning of Christ's words. They shudder and recoil when brought face to face with so tremendous a mystery. And though the utterances of Christ are plain and clear, and though He repeats His most solemn declaration again and again, and ever in a more emphatic form, they still exclaim: "It cannot be! He surely must have *meant* something else? He must have been speaking figuratively and symbolically." They will allow anything rather than mystery; and prefer any alternative rather than submit their intellects to the obedience of faith. Hence they refuse to accept the infallible words, even of God Himself, so long as they convey incomprehensible truths.

But why do men find it difficult to accept the wonderful? Why are the mysteries of faith so hard to endure? Why is the incomprehensible in religion so repulsive to the natural sense of mankind? Well, for two reasons. Firstly, because they have never truly realised the extremely limited range of their own faculties; and, secondly, because they have never thoroughly mastered the fact that innumerable mysteries exist all around them, and are to be found in abundance even in the most ordinary and commonplace objects of daily life. Perhaps a few minutes will not be un-

profitably spent in making these two points clear.

There is, of course, no creature upon earth that has been enriched with such countless and such signal favours as man. Yet priceless as many of them undoubtedly are, they fall immeasurably short of the infinite. Though man possesses extraordinary faculties, they are extremely restricted in their operation. Indeed, the truths which these faculties are able to reveal to him are the merest and meanest fraction, compared to those which still remain unrevealed. We are hemmed in upon every side. We live and move within an extremely narrow circle. We see, but only a short distance. The deep, fathomless depths of the interstellar spaces lie at unmeasured distances beyond our view. The telescope may help us a little, but millions of leagues beyond the reach of any instrument are, undoubtedly, worlds and constellations, and vast planetary systems that no human eye has ever gazed upon. All that our most perfect glasses can reveal to us is just the outer fringe of the limitless garment of creation.

It is precisely the same with the sense of hearing. We hear, but it is only the grosser and coarser sounds. The more delicate voices of nature lie utterly beyond us. We can hear neither the impetuous rushing of the distant planets as they travel with lightning-like speed from one part of



the heavens to another; nor the growing of the grass about our feet; nor the circulation of the sap and vital juices in shrub and tree; nor the bursting of the ten thousand times ten thousand microscopic cells giving birth to new life in its myriad forms. A veritable universe of sounds lies beyond the ken of the most delicate and sensitive human ear.

What has been remarked regarding the faculties of sight and hearing must be equally asserted of every other faculty, whether of smell, of taste, or of touch. And even if we arise from the senses of the body to contemplate the powers of the mind, the self-same laws of limitation are equally perceptible. The gift of reason or intelligence is, indeed, the highest and noblest gift of God to man in the natural order. It is this especially that establishes his claim to superiority over all the rest of the world around him. Yet how weak and inadequate a thing after all is unaided human reason. How restricted in its operation, and how narrow the circle of its influence. As a tiny child in some immense library draws a book from the shelves and laboriously and painfully spells out a word or two from its closely-printed pages, so man, with infinite difficulty, spells out a word here and there in the infinite book of nature.

“In nature’s infinite book of secrecy a little I

can read," says Shakespeare. Yes, "*a little*"; but oh, how little! Man knows something—not much—about a few things. But there is nothing whatever of which he knows absolutely all that might be known. Indeed, without entering at all into the more ethereal world of mind or spirit, we may truly affirm that our acquaintance even with material things is of the scantiest and most unsatisfactory kind. What we do know concerning the gross physical world of matter, compared to what we do not know, is as a grain of sand to a mountain.

Unhappily, man's innate conceit induces him to dwell with complacency upon the little he does know, rather than to learn humility by contemplating the vast regions of truth lying beyond his mental vision. And this is in part the reason that so many are unwilling to accept the mysteries of faith. They are distressed and disturbed when they come across the incomprehensible in religion, and grow restive and dissatisfied, just as though mystery were a new experience, and as though they had never been brought into direct and personal relations with the incomprehensible and the inexplicable in nature itself. Their very surprise and hesitancy prove how entirely they have failed to grasp the fact that, without entering at all into the regions of the supernatural, they must encounter endless mysteries at every step of their journey even through this natural life.

When we discourse of the Holy Eucharist, of Transubstantiation, of the Resurrection of the body, we hear cries of "Impossible". "Such things cannot be." "My reason revolts against such doctrines," and much else to the same effect. Dogmas which are at once incomprehensible and inexplicable, they imagine should be regarded as incredible. Hence the importance of realising how quite equally incomprehensible and inexplicable are many of the most ordinary operations of nature. All nature teems with insoluble mysteries. In every object, however commonplace, there are great depths, of which we can take no soundings; and dark chasms, into whose lurid bowels we may peer and peer, yet ever peer in vain. Now if so much of the *natural* world is a closed book to us, how much more should we expect the *supernatural* world to be? If this earth is so full of inexplicable difficulties, and of dark places through which the eye of the mind cannot penetrate, how much more should we expect to meet with similar and far greater difficulties and darknesses in the order of grace and of glory?

"Stand and consider the wondrous works of God," says the Holy Spirit by the lips of Job (xxxvii. 14). We will select one or two in the order of nature, that we may the better appreciate those which are proposed for our acceptance in the order of grace. We might pick out one of

the more unusual and recondite phenomena of nature, but we rather prefer to select the most familiar we can think of; indeed the simpler and the more commonplace the better. Take, then, magnetic attraction.

We must all have noticed how a magnet and a piece of steel will attract one another. The magnet exercises a force over steel, and draws it towards itself. How? We don't know. Nobody knows. It is a mystery in the natural order. The magnet and the steel are separated by a certain appreciable distance. How does the magnet throw its influence across that distance? Take two points, A and B, separated by the space of one inch (whether an inch or a thousand miles, the principle is the same). How can the magnet, resting at point A, act upon a piece of steel resting at point B, so as to overcome its native inertia, and to set it travelling over the intervening space? How, in other words, can a thing *act where it is not*—where it has no existence? What, if we may so express ourselves, is this invisible hand which the magnet stretches forth, and extends across the intervening space, and by which it overcomes the inertia of the steel and draws it to itself? We don't know. *No man can tell.* Nay, further: place an obstacle between the two. Interpose, say, a sheet of plate glass between the magnet and the steel. In other words, cut off the

communication—what then? Why, this obstacle proves to be no obstacle. The magnet acts upon the steel even through the glass. The communication is not cut off. The steel responds to the action, and starts to meet the magnet. It presses with a real and measurable force against the glass, in its fruitless, yet ceaseless efforts to reach the source of attraction; and so it will continue, as any one may test by experience. And what a simple experiment is this. Yet how passing strange. How hopelessly unintelligible. Who can really unravel the mystery, or give an exhaustive reply to our inquiries? No man. It is one among those numerous mysteries of which the world is full. The child of yesterday knows just as much about the secrets of magnetic attraction as the most learned scientist; that is to say, just nothing at all.

I might, further, point out how this attraction follows certain regular mathematical laws; how, for instance, its strength increases inversely as the square of the distance; but this might make the illustration needlessly complicated. Let me, then, merely suppose that while the experiment is proceeding, some learned exponent of science arrives on the scene. To my demand for an explanation he simply laughs good-naturedly at my simplicity, and exclaims condescendingly: "Oh, that is a very simple thing! That, sir, is nothing more or



less than magnetic attraction." *He* is quite satisfied. He imagines he has answered me; but, in sober truth, has he explained anything? Nothing whatever. He has merely given the phenomena a name. Am I any the wiser? Well, I now know *what to call* it, certainly; but I know no more *about it* than I did before. The mystery remains. Call it by what name you please, it cannot explain the fact. I am still face to face with the inexplicable. The only answer possible is, that things are as they are, and act as they act, because God has so willed and decreed. If, then, He decrees the inexplicable in the things of this world, why not in the things of the next world?

Here, then, we have a mystery—an inexplicable fact—in the very lowest department of creation, *viz.*, in inorganic and lifeless matter, in a piece of senseless and structureless iron ore. A mystery that, in spite of all the boasted advance of science, man's mind is too imperfect to deal with or to investigate. He stands puzzled, confounded and humiliated before a simple fragment of loadstone.

The higher we ascend in the scale of creation the more do wonders grow, both in number and in intensity. How unspeakably more wondrous is the vegetable than the mineral kingdom. It would be easy to point out a host of marvels in every flower and shrub, and blossom and bud;



but to economise space I will pass by the vegetable kingdom altogether, and ask the reader's kind attention for awhile, whilst I strive to point out the mysteries present in one of the commonest operations of the animal world. An operation which the reader has, no doubt, witnessed time after time, and yet one in which he perhaps never saw anything special to wonder at. Familiarity with a process has so strong a tendency, indeed, to destroy our power of appreciating its marvellousness, that I think it will be of considerable assistance to us if the subject be introduced by a somewhat extravagant supposition.

Suppose, then, that some unknown person were to come to us from another world, and producing a small vessel should say: "Here is a small oval box or receptacle made out of lime, and filled with a thickish viscid or glutinous substance. Keep it carefully for a few weeks in a warm and even temperature, and I undertake to say that, without any further attention on your part, it will gradually transform itself into a superb gold chronometer, with dial, hands, main-spring and hair-spring, lever escapement, and everything complete. Every wheel will be in its place and in ceaseless motion. Each hinge, rivet, screw and other accessory part will be carefully formed and placed in position. The whole will constitute a watch, ticking merrily all the day, and registering the

time at each succeeding moment." Such a supposition is enough to make one smile. One instinctively exclaims, "What nonsense! What a ludicrous idea! How extravagantly foolish; and, above all, how absolutely impossible." If, indeed, such a promise were really made, we should be inclined to think (1) either that the stranger was stark mad; or (2) that it was a piece of mere clever juggling; or, if the promised result did indeed take place, that (3) a miracle of a very extraordinary kind had been wrought.

Yet, strange though it may seem, what is happening continually in nature is very analogous to what I have supposed. What we may actually see taking place in the animal world is very similar indeed to what has been described, only immeasurably more extraordinary, immeasurably more mysterious, and—but for the fact that we can actually witness the whole process for ourselves—we should certainly say, immeasurably more impossible!

A watch is a beautiful thing; a complicated thing; a thing of many parts, admirably put together and most cunningly devised and adjusted. But a bird is immeasurably more beautiful, immeasurably more complicated, and a creature of a far greater number of most elaborate parts, far more exquisitely put together.

Take the egg<sup>1</sup> of any bird you please, let us say a goldfinch. When first laid by the hen, what is it but (1) an oval receptacle or box formed of lime or other calcareous matter; or, in plain English, a shell; and (2) filled with a thickish viscid glutinous substance? This substance is structureless and shapeless, and, for the most part, almost colourless; yet, keep it in a suitable temperature for a few weeks and it will become gradually transformed by the power of God acting through natural laws; not, indeed, into a watch, no; but into what is infinitely more admirable and estimable, *viz.*, into a living, breathing, sentient bird. Within the fragile shell, no thicker than your nail, changes and transformations are being gradually wrought, so singular and mysterious, that I know not to what I can compare them, unless it be to the changes that the earth went through during the six days of creation, when God brooded over the face of the deep, and drew order and symmetry out of chaos. A living being is being formed. The bones of leg and wing, the spinal column with all its articulations, the skull and pointed beak and sharp claws emerge, as if by magic, from out the liquid mass. Not only is each brittle bone beautifully fashioned, exquisitely

<sup>1</sup> "The egg from which most animals and plants are developed is a simple cell," says Ernst Haeckel in his *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte*, vol i., chap. viii.

finished, and polished as smooth as ivory—each different, yet all correlated—but they are knit together and adjusted with the utmost precision and harmony, and built up, *without hands*, not anyhow, not at haphazard, but according to a distinct and definite plan. Then without as much disturbance as would suffice to fracture the film of shell, flesh and skin clothe and envelop the entire skeleton; while throughout the whole there run innumerable channels and secret passages and ducts carrying arterial and venous blood from one extremity to the other. Invisible fingers are still moulding the beautiful form of the bird, and arranging its interior organs of nutrition and digestion, and forming that marvellous pneumatic pump, the heart, on the strictest scientific principles, which is to keep forcing the blood circulating throughout the whole organism year after year, without cessation, so long as life lasts.

Still the work proceeds. The original viscid glutinous liquid is all that the shell contains, or has ever contained. From it, therefore, and from naught else, is drawn the gorgeous plumage that is to be the glory of the bird. The wings are supplied with long, light, pointed feathers, suitable for flight, and the breast is coated with softest down of many brilliant colours. All is daintily finished, delicately tinted, and Divinely made. *Digitus Dei est hic*. Yet, observe. The fragile

shell is still intact. No fresh material has been introduced. All—bones, muscles, veins, blood, brain, skull, beak, claws, down, feathers, liver, heart, lungs, etc.—have been constructed out of the same simple structureless liquid albumen, mucus, cell-substance, or protoplasm—call it what you will.

Place your ear gently against the shell. Listen. Can you hear the great Artist at work? Can you detect any sound of implement or tool while the transformation is going on? Where but a short time ago there was nothing but a transparent liquid, we now find that the most wondrous and complex objects and organs have been manufactured. The eyes so bright, clear and penetrating of the imprisoned bird, though made *for light*, have been constructed *in darkness*, and from the simple protoplasm. And consider what this means. For though the eye is but one organ, and a comparatively insignificant one, yet what a complicated thing it is. It includes the pupil, the sclerotic, the cornea, the iris, the crystalline lens, the vitreous humour, the ciliary processes, choroid coat, the retina, with the various blood-vessels which feed it, and the muscles which move it and adjust it, etc. Yet all are there, and in their proper positions. So of all else, the wings so swift and true and light, the throat and lungs and vocal chords, all accurately attuned and prepared within the



silent shell, await but its breaking, to emerge into the light of day, and to discourse soft sounds over hill and dale. All is being completed within that miniature universe. All is there. Nothing has been forgotten. Matter enough, but no more than enough, has been stored within the shell for the construction of every limb, organ and muscle, and all else down to the smallest fragment of down that goes to complete the perfection of the bird. At last the shell breaks. The viscid fluid has disappeared, and in its place a bird darts forth instinct with life; with glancing eyes, and flapping wings, and palpitating heart, and with a throat eloquent with song and softly warbled harmonies.

What a strange and wonderful history! What a stupendous miracle of Divine power and wisdom! Talk of mystery! Talk of the incomprehensible! Well, here in this familiar phenomenon we are confronted with a whole world of unsearchable mysteries. And so far from disappearing or diminishing as we inquire more searchingly and investigate more minutely, they rather become more insoluble and unfathomable. Nay, if we have not yet been startled at the sight of these and similar transformations, is it not just precisely *because we have not paused to consider* them attentively, but passed them heedlessly by? and because custom has dulled our minds, and because what is perpetually going on and repeating itself



for ever and ever, fails to provoke attention or even to excite inquiry? For what is the fact? The undeniable fact is, that all creation is palpitating with mystery. Not a cubic inch of earth, air or water, but contains enough to bewilder and confound the most enlightened intelligence. We live and breathe in an atmosphere of mystery. Above and below and around us lie unexplored and inexorable depths—depths which defy all human soundings, and into whose dark and unexplored recesses man gazes fearfully and tremulously, but always in vain. What do I say? Around him? Below him? Why even *within* him mystery dwells. Man is to himself the most bewildering of enigmas. Whence come life, motion and sensation? What *is* life? What are thought and imagination? What is memory which binds the past with the present, and links together in one co-ordinate whole the experience of many eventful years?

What is sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye, that steeps our senses in forgetfulness, and steals us awhile from our own company? Surely a strange and mysterious thing. And dreams—what are they, and whence do they arise? Whence come those strange and wondrous scenes, the phantasmagoria that pass and repass before the closed eyes of the sleeper, with all the vividness and speaking impressiveness of

waking life; that call back the forms of the dead and the absent, and repeople earth with long-forgotten images of friends and foes! In the somniant state the sleeper sees clearly and basks in the sunshine, though all the time he may be really buried in an Egyptian darkness: he hears sounds and converses with his friends though he rests in truth in unbroken silence; and even though his limbs lie motionless in his bed, he may still be fighting battles, scaling mountains, or fording rivers. He is the sport of fancy, the plaything of hallucinations. In sleep he is, and he is not; at once all things and nothing. What is sleep? The echo answers, What? We are left to wonder and surmise.

Thus, question after question suggests itself to the inquiring mind, but for never a one is there an answer forthcoming. And, as it is with the mind, so it is with the body. Why does a child grow and develop till it reaches manhood, and then stop, to grow no higher? Why is one pair of eyes brown and another blue? Why is one infant masculine and the other feminine? and how is the relative proportion of the sexes preserved throughout the world, and throughout the ages?

So, again, how is life maintained by food and drink? and by what marvellous process is the *same food* transformed into such *wholly different things* as blood and bone, artery and nerve, muscle

and tendon, skin and hair, teeth and nails? And by what means is each portion of the organism (*qua* organism) built up, distributed and maintained in activity; and how is each instructed to discharge its own peculiar functions?

We need not to be told that scientific men have affixed learned names to every natural process, and have carefully labelled every phenomenon. For that means nothing. Anybody can give a thing a name. Yet many seem to forget, or at least fail to realise, that to *name* is not to *explain*. To label a mystery is not to solve it. A score of learned terms and definitions will not suffice to throw a bridge, even of gossamer, across an impassable gulf. If I refrain from suggesting further difficulties, it is by no means because I have exhausted my stock, but merely because space is limited.

We will conclude, then, with the remark that, to look out upon this material earth, and to fully realise how mysterious is every object in it (as soon as we probe the least degree beneath the surface), teaches us a profound lesson. It proves to us how singularly weak and puny a thing is the human mind itself; it shows us how straitened and confined is our knowledge of even the simplest things; and throws us into a disposition proper and fitting to receive with reverence and docility the incomprehensible truths of reve-

lation. God is the infinitely Incomprehensible, dwelling in light inaccessible; and all His works have an element of the incomprehensible in them. But the higher we rise in the scale of creation the more profound do these mysteries become. Their high-water mark is reached when, transcending the natural altogether, we enter into the supernatural regions of grace and glory.

But of these we will deal another time.

## CHAPTER II.

### TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND MULTIPLICATION.

Verbum caro panem verum  
Verbo carnem efficit :  
Fitque sanguis Christi merum  
ET SI SENSUS DEFICIT :  
AD FIRMANDUM COR SINCERUM  
SOLA FIDES SUFFICIT.

THE two greatest mysteries in connection with the Holy Eucharist are Transubstantiation and Multiplication. To understand the precise meaning of the doctrine of Transubstantiation we must endeavour to acquire the clearest idea possible of the difference between substance and accidents. Every object in creation is made up of these two elements. By the substance we mean a thing's very essence. By the accidents we mean its mere qualities. The word "substance" is from the Latin *sub*, and *stare*, *i.e.*, to stand under, to support, sustain. Substance, therefore, is that which stands under or supports the qualities perceived by our senses; that which lies behind the phenomena; that, in a word, in which the attributes and accidents of a thing may be said to reside. The accidents, on the other hand, are the mere qualities inherent in the substance; that which the substance supports; those external

appearances or evidences by which the existence of the substance is recognised and made known to us.

An example will make this clear. A piece of iron ore is put into my hand. The first thing that strikes me is that it is unusually heavy. Then I notice, further, that it is of a certain shape, size, colour, hardness, temperature and taste; and that when struck it emits a peculiar sound, and so forth. By these and similar indications I am led to the conclusion that what I hold in my hand is a piece of iron. Yet neither the weight, size, colour, temperature nor the taste, etc., is, itself, iron; nor do all these, even when added together, constitute iron. And this is clear, since every one of these qualities might be changed without in any way changing the substance. This is evident enough as regards the size and the shape; but the same holds good of all else. Thus the dull blackish colour, by the application of heat, becomes a brilliant red; by the application of greater heat it becomes a glowing white, yet it never ceases to be iron. So with regard to hardness. Cast the iron into the furnace, and though now soft and limpid as water, it is the same substance as before. There is no quality of which this may not be said. Take, for example, that quality which seems particularly inherent to all metals, *i.e.*, weight. Iron is heavy. True, but even heaviness is not of the essence of iron. Since it depends upon attraction, it will



change according to circumstances, and under certain conditions disappear altogether. A cubic foot of iron, if transferred to the moon, will weigh less than at the surface of the earth, but a great deal more if deposited on the outer crust of the planet Saturn. Were every other material object annihilated, it would lose its entire weight, yet it would certainly not cease, on that account, to be iron. Again, the sound iron emits on being struck depends entirely upon its shape and size, etc. All these are mere qualities, and not even necessary qualities of the substance; and because not essential, we call them accidents. Yet, observe, it is *only by these and similar accidents* that even the bare existence of the substance is made manifest to us.

Of substance in itself we know really nothing. If asked what the substance of such a familiar thing as iron is, we must confess our ignorance. We cannot tell. No living man has ever seen it. It is neither weight, nor shape, nor colour, nor taste, nor sound. Such phenomena simply indicate and inform us of the presence of a substance; the substance itself always eludes our grasp. It is just as invisible to our eyes, just as impervious to our senses, as the spirit of an archangel. All substances—as distinct from accidents—are denizens of the invisible world. No man hath seen them at any time.

Let us apply what has been said to the adorable

mystery of the Holy Eucharist. I ascend the altar to say Mass, and taking a piece of bread I hold it before me, and pronounce the solemn words of consecration, and by the infinite power of God the "mystery of faith" is wrought. The substance of bread is no longer there. In its place there is the substance of the Body of Christ. Can I detect the change? As has been already pointed out, we cannot see any substance whatsoever; therefore we cannot see the substance of bread. But as it is impossible to see the substance of bread, of course it is impossible to see that another substance has been substituted for it.

All that we can see, touch or taste are the accidents, but they have not been changed or in any way affected. There is no miracle, therefore, in the fact that when we look at a consecrated host we do not see the substance of Christ's Body. The miracle would be if we did. All that we see after the consecration is just precisely what we saw before the consecration, *viz.*, the accidents of bread. And our senses are not deceived, for the things we see are really there, *viz.*, the *accidents* of bread—the invisible *substance* alone having departed.

Transubstantiation then means that on the due recitation of certain words by a properly ordained minister, God by His omnipotence transubstantiates, *i.e.*, changes, the substance—not the accidents—of bread into His own sacred Body, so

that what was just now bread is no longer bread, but the living Flesh of the Son of God.

Now it certainly seems, at first blush, a most marvellous and unheard-of thing to change wheaten bread into a living human organism! And it is undoubtedly a stupendous mystery. Yet, after all, is it not very much what every man, woman and child is doing each day of their lives? I must not be understood to press the analogy too far, but the analogy is worth pointing out. When a man sits down at table and feeds himself on bread and wine, what becomes of that food? Are not the nutritive elements of it gradually changed into his own body and blood? Does it not in very truth enter into the composition of his own substance? Is it not an undeniable physiological fact, that what is bread and wine to-day may be flesh and blood and bone to-morrow?

Why the very purpose of food is to keep the body in repair. Particle by particle, and molecule by molecule the entire body crumbles away. It needs to be constantly rebuilt; and every effete cell and exhausted atom is replaced by fresh atoms formed from the food. Medical men assure us that our bodies are undergoing a continual process of destruction and reconstruction. This goes on ceaselessly till at last no single fibre of any limb or organ of our former body remains. The entire organism has been fashioned from the bread and

wine, or other food on which we have lived. Supposing a man to live exclusively on bread and wine, then *the bread and wine become literally changed into his body and blood!*

This change of common bread and wine by the natural processes of nutrition, digestion and assimilation, into the complex and extremely intricate form of the human body, is indeed a mystery in the order of nature. It is a change wrought by the omnipotence of the Creator, who has made all our organs and prescribed to each organ its special functions.

Now, let me ask: Since God enables us to change bread and wine into our body and blood by the ordinary physical processes, why should He not enable us (if He so please) to do the same thing *instantly*? And if into the substance of our own bodies, why not (supposing a sufficient motive) into the substance of His own sacred Body, which is as truly human as our own?

Having suggested this similitude I must not fail to point out that the analogy can help us only to a limited extent. There are many and stupendous differences between the change of bread into flesh by the natural process of digestion, and the change of bread into the human flesh of Christ by means of the words of consecration.

It will be enough here to note some of the more striking.

I. In Transubstantiation the substance of bread is changed into the adorable Body of Christ not indirectly but directly; not by any gradual process, but by the *direct* power of God, and instantly. And further, the *whole substance* of bread is changed into the *whole substance* of Christ's Body.

II. In Transubstantiation the substance is changed, not so as to form what till then had no existence, but into that which already exists. That is to say, before the consecrating words are spoken our Lord's sacred Body exists in Heaven, perfect, entire and wanting in nothing, and by virtue of the words of consecration the bread resting on the altar is changed, *not into a new Body*, but into that very pre-existing Body.

III. The body into which the substance of bread is changed in the Mass is a glorified Body—a true Body indeed, possessing all its constituent parts and organs, but spiritualised, incorruptible, immortal and glorious. This doctrine refers only to Masses offered up since the time of our Lord's Resurrection.

IV. It is not only present throughout the consecrated Host, but is wholly present in every portion of it.

Let us now make a few remarks upon the second great miracle in connection with the Holy Eucharist, *viz.*, the multiplication of the real presence. We must observe, at starting, that the



word "multiplication" is to be applied, not to the *Person* of Christ, but to the *Presence* of Christ. If two priests are celebrating Mass at the same moment, one in London and the other in Sydney, what happens when they come to the words of consecration? There is a glorified Body in the London Church, but is there *another* glorified Body in the Sydney Church? No! Not *another*. It is the same sacred Body in both places. And so, in every tabernacle in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, there is present the *one and only Body* of Jesus Christ. Hence it is not our Lord's Body that is multiplied, but merely the presence of that one Body in ten thousand times ten thousand places. And just as Christ foreshadowed the mystery of Transubstantiation, by changing water into wine, so did He also foreshadow the multiplication of His sacramental presence by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in the desert.

Let us, for a moment, consider that incident in our Lord's life. We are told in the fourteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel that a great multitude followed our Lord into the desert, and He had compassion on and healed their sick; and, "When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying: This is a desert place, and the hour is now past: send away the multitudes, that, going into the towns, they may buy themselves food. But Jesus said, They have no need to go: give



you them to eat. They answered Him: We have here but five loaves and two fishes. . . . And when He had commanded the multitude to sit down upon the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did *all* eat, and were filled. And they took up what remained, twelve full baskets of fragments. And the number of them that did eat was five thousand *men*, besides women and children.”

Now, observe here that Jesus Christ fed five thousand men, not counting women and children. How many women and children there were is not stated, but probably they were present in larger numbers than the men. Even if we put them down as only a corresponding number, *viz.*, five thousand women and five thousand children, that would bring up the total to fifteen thousand. Yet they were all fed, and fed so well that when they had finished twelve baskets full of fragments remained. But *how* did Jesus Christ manage to feed so many? He might have done it in one of two ways: (1) He might have distributed the five loaves, and then have created some thousands of other loaves, so that each man, woman and child should be provided with a loaf; or (2) He might, without creating a single new loaf, have caused the five loaves to be miraculously pres-

ent in many places. Had He adopted the *first* method, and created fresh loaves, He would, indeed, have wrought a great miracle; but that would not have been "feeding the multitude with *five* loaves," but with five *plus* the thousands just created. A great miracle would have been worked, but an entirely different miracle.

Now, the Scripture represents our Lord feeding the multitude with only five loaves. St. John even, speaking of the fragments which remained over when all had had their fill, distinctly says that they "filled twelve baskets with the fragments" (not of so many thousand loaves), but "of the *five* barley loaves" (John vi. 13). Thus it is clear that Jesus Christ multiplied not the *five* barley loaves, but the presence of these loaves, so that each loaf must have been at one and the same time in the hands of several, and must have been eaten and digested at the same time by a considerable number. In fact, just as at Holy Communion, many persons receive the self-same Body of Jesus Christ (though the accidents of each separate particle are distinct), so on that wonderful occasion many persons received the self-same loaf.

How is it possible to render the same substance present in many distant places at the same moment? Well, if we knew more about the nature of substance—if it were something familiar to us

—we might possibly discover some satisfying answer. Since, however, as we have already pointed out, we have never seen, nor felt, nor touched, nor come in direct communication with any substance whatsoever, since no man has ever seen or known substance, it is hardly to be wondered at that we cannot explain the prodigy.

It is a mystery, but it is by no means the *only* mystery. Is not life itself a mystery? Are not birth, and death, and sensation mysteries? To deny a thing merely because it is mysterious is to deny half the facts of history and science. We have God's authority for it, and the clear and express declaration of His infallible Church, and that is enough.

Now, what does the Church teach? She teaches that Jesus Christ is truly and really and substantially present wherever the Blessed Sacrament is received; wherever Mass is said, and wherever Holy Communion is given. Consequently, if a hundred persons go to Holy Communion at the same time, it follows that the sacred Body of Christ rests upon one hundred different tongues, and is present in one hundred different places. Each communicant receives, not a portion only, but the entire Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. It is not that there are one hundred sacred bodies, certainly not; there is but one Body of Jesus Christ; but that one body is in one hundred dif-

ferent places, and has been given to one hundred different people, and each receives as all, and all as each. Though God gives all He has and is, yet He is none the poorer; and though He were to give to a single individual what He gives to the thousand, the individual receives no more than before.

Let us try to illustrate this in some way. The Scripture itself seems to suggest an illustration. It often speaks of our Lord as the *Word* of the Father; e.g., *Verbum caro factum est*; the Word was made Flesh. But let us take an ordinary word—a human word. Consider what an illustration it affords us. I utter a word, and at once that word is intimately present with each one who hears it. That word in its entirety penetrates into every ear that is open to sound. If but one person be present, he receives the word in its entirety. If five hundred or a thousand persons be present, each individual of that multitude receives the same word in its entirety. No one receives more than another; each has what the other has; no more, no less. But a single word has been uttered. It has been uttered but once, and yet all have received it; not merely a “similar” or “equivalent” word, but the *self-same*; and whether the audience be many or few it makes not the slightest difference; the *single* word issuing out of my mouth reaches with equal completeness, unbroken and undivided, every one

present. A beautiful image, surely, of the Word of God, the Eternal Word made flesh, produced by the Father by an eternal generation, entering into the soul of every communicant.

We may still further illustrate the Catholic doctrine by pointing out another name given to Jesus Christ. He is spoken of as the Wisdom of the Father; or, again, as the Truth. Indeed it is thus that Jesus Christ speaks of Himself. "I am the way, the *truth*, and the life." Suppose a man acquire a knowledge of certain truths. Suppose, *e.g.*, he has travelled into some foreign land; he comes home; he writes a book; he gets fifty thousand copies printed; he gives a copy to fifty thousand different people. Now, in a book we have two totally distinct things—in the first place, we have the story, the narrative, the facts recounted, which I will call the truth of the book; and, in the second place, we have the paper, the leaves, the type, the letterpress, the punctuation, which do not indeed constitute the truth, but which are merely the channel by which the truth is conveyed to us. The first I call the substance of the book; the latter I call the accidents. Put these fifty thousand copies of the book into the hands of fifty thousand different men. What is the result? Well, the result is, that each man possesses (1) the *entire* truth, and (2) the *exact* truth, and (3) the *same* truth. The accidents may be different in each,



but the substance is the same; and not only similar, but identical. Each book may vary in size, weight, type, paper, material, binding, etc. It makes no difference. There is not one truth in one volume and another in another, but the same truth is present wherever there is a copy of the book; and if there be fifty thousand copies, then the same truth, whole and entire and identical, is equally present in fifty thousand different places. And further, whether a man receive but one copy, or whether he receive fifty copies, or even the whole edition of fifty thousand volumes, he will have the same truth, neither more nor less, than if he had received but *one*.

So in the Blessed Sacrament, if one hundred particles are consecrated, the incarnate Wisdom of God is present under each, just as the wisdom of any author is present in each of a hundred volumes. Again, as the shape and form of the pages and letters—whether large or small, Roman or Gothic—are merely *accidental* differences, and just as the same truth is equally present whether in small type or large type, so the same Jesus Christ is equally present whether the accidents of the Host, *i.e.*, the shape, colour and size, be the same or different. This is, of course, only an analogy; a mere illustration, and not to be pressed too far; for whereas in a book the truth is merely expressed by signs, in the Blessed Sacrament the



Eternal Truth, *i.e.*, the infinite God is substantially present in His human and Divine nature.

Many heretics not only deny this to be the case, but (what is a totally different thing) they deny even its possibility, for they deny that any substance can be present in more than one place at the same time. Yet such an objection cannot be seriously maintained, even by Protestants. They may deny the *truth* of the multiplication of Christ's presence, just as they deny the infallibility of the Pope, and other Catholic doctrines, but they cannot deny its *possibility* without stultifying themselves, since they do admit the principle in the case of other substances; *e.g.*, they admit that God is *everywhere*, and wholly, substantially, and personally present in every place. God is here. God is there. God is within the Church, and without the Church; He is on land and sea, and in the most distant stars, substantially and personally present. "If I ascend into Heaven, He is there; if I descend into hell, He is there." Yet not divided—not, as the ocean in its bed, *in part* here, and in part there, but wholly everywhere. It is one and the same God who is here, and who is there. If then God can be wholly present in every place, why may not His sacred humanity be present at least in many places?

It may be urged, God is the Uncreated, and the humanity of Jesus Christ is created. Well, then,

let us take a created object, *viz.*, the soul of man. What do philosophers and metaphysicians teach regarding the soul? They tell us that the soul has no extension, no parts beyond parts; and yet, that it is present throughout the whole of the sensitive body. For instance, they assure me that my soul is wholly in my right arm, and wholly in my left; wholly in my brain, and wholly in my heart; consequently the same indivisible soul is present in many different places at the same moment: not merely by its effects, but substantially present.

This is a doctrine taught by the greatest and profoundest of metaphysicians: not only by Catholics, observe; not only by such intellectual giants as St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and Suarez and De Lugo, and others, but by Protestants, and even pagans.

Aristotle, the disciple of Plato, who flourished more than three hundred years before Christ, taught that the soul is "all in the whole body, and all in every part"; and he (though a pagan) is reputed as the greatest philosopher that ever lived. There is, therefore, evidently nothing repugnant in itself to a substance being in more than one place at once. Protestant philosophers say the same; thus the Scotch Presbyterian Hamilton writes: "The supposition that the soul (or the mind, as he calls it) is really present wherever we are conscious that it acts—in other words, the

peripatetic aphorism—the soul is all in the whole and all in every part—is more philosophical, and consequently more probable, than any other opinion,” and “we have no right to say it is limited to any one part of the organism”.<sup>1</sup>

Now, if Protestants, and even the very pagans, admit that the soul, not merely may be, but actually is, present in many places at once, *e.g.*, in one's eyes when one sees, in one's ears when one hears, in one's tongue when one speaks, and so of every other part of the human body, and not *partly* in one place, and *partly* in another, but wholly in each; the principle that a substance may coexist at one and the same moment in different places is clearly conceded. And if the substance of the soul, why not the substance of the human nature of Christ?

As to explaining “how”. Well, it will be time enough to explain how *Christ* is present in many places at once, when philosophers have made it clear how the *soul* may be and is at this moment in many different places at once. One thing is abundantly proved, *viz.*, that nothing in the doctrines of the Church, however wonderful, is contrary to reason. Many things are beyond and above the reach of man's unaided reason; but no one can show that the Church teaches anything whatsoever in contradiction with it.

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, vol. ii., pp. 127, 128.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SHADOW OF SIN, OR THE REASONABLENESS OF THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY.

“Sicut aurum quod ex aliis permixtionibus sordidum efficitur, per ignem purgatur: ita et defuncti a sordibus, quas ex mundanis actibus contraxerunt, per ignem purgatorii mundantur.”—ST. AMBROS., *Super Apocal.*, cap. xxi.

WHEN a mariner has lost his chart and compass, and finds himself the sport of wind and wave, he is glad to direct his bark across the troubled waters by the faint and flickering gleam of the distant stars; so, too, men who have lost the Faith, and who know nothing of the infallible authority of the Church, are glad to appeal to mere human reason to pilot them over the dangerous and turgid ocean of life.

Indeed, a non Catholic possesses no other authority to which he can appeal; and is therefore perfectly justified in satisfying himself of the Church's claims before submitting to her teaching. But when once he *has* satisfied himself of her claims, when once he is reasonably convinced of her Divine commission to teach all nations, from that moment reason ceases to be the supreme arbiter of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, of justice and injustice. He possesses a surer, a higher, a more trustworthy guide. One whose

voice is infallible, and whose words, though uttered in human accents, are no other than the words of God Himself. "Who heareth you, heareth Me, and who despiseth you, despiseth Me."

One who believes a doctrine merely because it is reasonable, because it satisfies his mind, or because it sounds plausible, may be a most excellent Protestant, and may act fully up to the principle of private judgment, but he is no Catholic. The faith of a Catholic rests upon much higher grounds than mere reason. Whatever the Church teaches will of course be reasonable, because it is true, but whereas with a Catholic a doctrine is *reasonable because it is true*, with a Protestant *it is true because it is reasonable*. As an instance in point we may refer to the doctrine of Purgatory. Though it has been scoffed at, and derided, and turned out of doors, and misrepresented and caricatured, we know it to be true, because we have the Church's warrant for it, and the Church is "the pillar and ground of truth". But, on the other hand, if it be true, it must of necessity be reasonable likewise; and the task before us now is to make this fact clear—to show even according to unaided human reason and common sense that it is a necessary postulate; that, in short, to deny Purgatory is impossible, without doing violence to reason.

If we look out upon the world and examine the lives of different men we shall find that they fall



naturally into three distinct groups. The first is but a small one. It consists of those highly-favoured souls, few and rare, who spring up perfect creations of Divine grace and power; souls around whom an altogether special providence seems to keep guard: whom God never seems to let out of His hands, even for an instant; but whom He shields from every danger, and saves from every fall: souls indeed who almost seem out of place in this dark, sinful, woe-begotten world of ours, so pure, so spotless and so unspeakably bright do they appear! They are, as it were, the picked fruit, the choice specimens of earth, made, one might almost fancy, for the express purpose of exhibiting the power and omnipotence of God's protective love and fostering care. Such was St. John the Baptist, sanctified in his mother's womb; and St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who laid his head on His Master's breast: such also was the chaste and gentle St. Joseph, the foster-father of Christ; and such, above all and before all and beyond all, was the Virgin immaculate and all pure, whose very name carries with it an aroma of sweetness and perfection, inspiring joy and gladness. Souls upon whom the shadow of sin has never fallen; who were ever faithful to grace and loyal to God; who grew in years only to grow in sanctity and perfection. These form the first division of the human family.

What becomes of them? Where is their dwelling-place and their home? Ah! with them to die is to go to God. To die is to be set free. Death is but the passage from earth to Heaven: but the rending of the veil that shuts out the beautiful vision of eternal peace. No earthly tie detains them, no human bond holds them back. The hour of their demise registers the hour of their triumph: they quit the earth only to enter at once into the joy of the Lord. Or rather, they had never *really* been parted from God. All their lives long they had been nestling on His breast, and reposing securely in His arms, and death to them was only as the gentle shock with which we awaken a sleeping child—they opened their eyes only to gaze entranced and enraptured full on the beautiful face of Him they loved.

II. Then there is another class who form a marked contrast to these. A class consisting of men without religion and without love: men who make up what the Scripture calls the "World" when it says, "The world is the enemy of God. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," etc. These are persons who may be honoured, esteemed, and made much of by men. They may dwell in rich houses and sumptuous palaces, and may have many friends and a wide acquaintance and considerable influence; they may be much spoken of, and flattered and sought

after, but their souls are steeped in iniquity. Men who know not God, and do not care to know Him, but who pass their lives in sin, and spend their years in forging for themselves chains which eternity will not wear through, and fetters which will hold them fast in the dungeons of hell for ever.

Those who die at enmity with God, who depart hence with mortal sin in their heart, unrepented and unconfessed, sink at once into the lake of fire, to begin a term of suffering which knows no end; and to be living witnesses throughout all future ages to God's irresistible power and His undying hatred of sin.

Were these two the only classes there would be little difficulty in dispensing with a Purgatory. Just as the first class of mankind that we have considered rise at once to Heaven, so this last sinks at once to hell. There is no difficulty so far.

III. But, in addition to the absolutely spotless and the manifestly reprobate, is there not another and a larger body of Christians who can be classed under neither of these categories? Who have neither the perfection of the first nor the diabolical wickedness of the last. Persons who are neither strikingly virtuous nor strikingly vicious, who do not arrest our attention or make us pause to marvel either at their piety on the one hand, or their depravity on the other. Men of ordinary virtue; of decent, regular lives; honest, sober,

truthful, modest ; men who have their faults and their failings, and who are striving with a greater or less earnestness against them ; men who fall, and perhaps occasionally fall grievously, but who struggle up again, and go on their way resolved to do better. What is to become of such as these when they come to die ? Suppose death were suddenly to overtake them, into what invisible region would their souls wing their flight ? Would they ascend at once, all stained and bespattered with the slime of earthly imperfection, into the very bosom of God ? or must we perforce consign them straight away to the land of eternal darkness and to the pool of quenchless fire ? Is there no third alternative ? According to the popular Protestant teaching there is not.

We will take a typical case. Suppose a man living in the great dreary city of London, or Liverpool, or Manchester—a married man, of mature age. He is a lawyer, or a doctor, or a man of business. He spends the greater part of the day in the exercise of his profession or trade. He enjoys life ; he shares its amusements and its recreations ; he is respected and trusted, and has many friends. His business will not permit him much time for religious practices, though it must be confessed that he gives less even than he might. He goes to Mass, at least on Sundays, though he studiously avoids the sermon ;

he says his morning and evening prayers, but he would rather we did not inquire too nicely into the fervour and earnestness that accompanies them; he confesses his sins, but his purposes of amendment are not very firm, and he takes no great trouble to atone for sin by any self-imposed penance.

He has his faults, and he is not altogether unconscious of them; nay, he regrets them, though he may not make any sustained effort to overcome them. Then he is irritable, or quarrelsome, or harsh to his subordinates, or uncharitable and censorious in his conversation, or he is too unmeasured and unrestrained with his tongue. He falls into many imperfections, he commits many venial sins. Then he is much engrossed with things of time; much preoccupied with the affairs of daily life. In a word, he is a man of ordinary virtue—one of the masses; an average Catholic, living for God, but not at all indifferent to the opinions of men; determined to please God, yet not by any means inclined to despise the favour and the smile of the world; resolved to walk to God, yet always taking a circuitous route. He is one who dreads mortal sin, and stands in fear of its consequences, but who is not likely to distress himself much about lesser faults.

Such a man is no saint; indeed, he makes no pretensions to sanctity; he does not profess to be a model; he is a traveller wending his way along



the dusty road of life; his feet are bruised with many a stone, and torn and gashed with many a brier. At last he reaches the end of his journey; sickness comes, and his term of trial is nearly over. He lies on the bed of death, his end approaches; at last he dies . . . he dies—as men generally die—that is to say, *as he lived*. His death is, in fact, what deaths almost invariably are, an abridgment, an epitome of life: it is good, not perfect. We rejoice that it is no worse, though we might wish it were better: it inspires us with confidence and hope, but it is not the death of a saint. Nor can it be! The soul does not undergo a sudden transformation during its last hours: there is no sudden leap from a state of incipient love to a state of perfect charity. Imperfections and faults of character, the growth possibly of years, still cling by a thousand invisible tendrils to the soul: nor are they shaken off in a moment. There is no sudden change, or, if there be, the mere approach of death or the weariness of pain is not enough to produce it. And so his earthly course draws to a close.

Here I have sketched, as though with a few hasty strokes of the pencil, a typical man. One who may be said to represent a considerable number. In fact (if we confine our thoughts to Catholics), it probably covers the majority of cases. We ourselves must surely come under the number, for

if we dare not aspire to the innocence of a St. John the Baptist, so neither shall we consent to take our stand among the reprobate. Indeed, we may say that this class is made up of myriads? But now the question arises: What is to become of these myriads? Where are we to place men such as the one whose character I have roughly drawn?

Were we Protestants of the ordinary type we should be sorely perplexed, for they permit only heaven and hell, and he is as little fitted for the one place as for the other. They place us in a most awkward dilemma so long as they allow us but the two alternatives.

Is he then to be borne straight to heaven, without any previous purification, without any cleansing or preparation? Is this soul, the abode of a thousand imperfections and small vices and failings, to take its stand at once among the glorious citizens of the city of God? Is heaven, the abode of "the just made perfect," to harbour a creature who has that within him which is odious and revolting in the sight of the Most High? that which savours of weakness and infirmity, of disobedience and self-will? Evidently not! The words of the Holy Spirit Himself are eminently explicit upon this point. God declares, in unmistakable language, that "nothing defiled shall enter heaven".<sup>1</sup> *Nothing* defiled. No! not a stain or a blot, be it but

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. xxi. 27.

of a sin of thought, or a hasty word, however passing, however momentary; if but a particle of earthly dust or defilement still adhere to the soul, it may not, it cannot enter.

However slight the defilement may be, it holds it back; it stands as a lion in its path: it rises up before it as a wall of brass; it checks its passage like a deep angry torrent roaring defiance as it rushes down its rocky bed. Though the soul presses forward, though it trembles in its love and eager haste to fling itself into the arms of God—yea! though it would die of very anguish, were it mortal, to find itself thrust back, and impeded from plunging and losing itself in the ocean of God's inexpressible delights. It is, nevertheless, withheld by its sins—possibly by a single sin, and that a small, a light, a trifling one. How the soul is wrung with anguish; how its heart is pierced with pain; how its whole mind and innermost being is burning and writhing in the flames of unsatisfied desires, to be united with the one supreme end for which it was created—for God, whose inexpressible Beauty and infinite Love it is beginning, for the first time, to know something about. But no! It cannot enter yet. It is still a debtor to God's justice, and it may not go from hence till it has satisfied its entire debt. "Amen, amen, I say to you; you shall not go out from hence until you have paid the last farthing."

No ; as a venial offence, *i.e.*, a little impatience, kept Moses from the promised land, so will any small fault debar a soul from heaven. Nothing else could check Moses, the great leader of God's people ; nothing but sin could prevail over him, or detain him on his way. He prevailed triumphantly over all other obstacles. The long journey, the arid desert, the fiery serpents could not hinder his onward march. Even the sea itself—the great sea before which the mightiest pause and rein up, receded at his approach, and stood up like a wall on either side to let him pass. Yet he, whom neither Pharaoh, nor his army, nor the arid desert, nor the deep sea, could stay in his onward course, was held fast and kept in bondage by a single venial fault, and prevented from entering the promised land.

And so it is with the Eden of the future, the heaven above, the least offence will check our immediate entry.

No one, who reflects upon what heaven is, would allow for a moment that an ordinary average Christian can enter at once into its possession. For what *is* heaven in its essence and substance? What constitutes the ecstatic joys of heaven? What do we mean by heaven?

Heaven is the inseparable union of God the infinite Creator with man, His fragile and lowly creature. It is the union between God and the

soul. A union so close and intimate that the world has nothing to which we can compare it.<sup>1</sup> It is without example and without parallel: unique and *sui generis*—(a) the soul loses itself in God without forfeiting its identity; (b) it becomes all God-like and Divine without ceasing to be human; (c) it shares in the knowledge and the power and the beauty and the holiness of God, and is made in a wholly inexpressible and sublime sense “a participator in the Divine nature,” to use the bold expression of the apostle. What this union is we can neither imagine nor describe. “Eye hath not seen it, ear hath not heard it, the heart cannot fathom it, words cannot picture it, the mind cannot conceive it.” All we know is, that in it consists the essential bliss of heaven, a bliss so excessive, so overpowering, that without it all other joys are empty, illusory and unsatisfying.

Now, who will dare to say that God would so unite with Himself any soul not perfectly spotless? Who will assert that Infinite Purity and Holiness would extend His arms and draw to His side, and press to His bosom, aught that is defiled or stained, or sinful, or impure? He knows little of God, who imagines that there can be any such union between light and darkness, between truth

<sup>1</sup> “*Trahit enim amor amantem extra se, et collocat eum in amato,*” is the expression employed by B. Albertus Magnus. *De adherendo Deo*, cap. xii.



and falsehood, beauty and deformity. No! whatever else may be said of such imperfect and sin-stained souls, one thing at least is clear and patent and beyond dispute, and that is, till cleansed they can never enter heaven; never lose themselves in God, or enjoy the society of the saints. Never while God continues to be what He is; never while He is the infinite Sanctity, and the uncreated Goodness.

Then, must we say that all these souls are to be condemned to the quenchless flames of hell? Are all but the very highest of the canonised saints to pass their eternity in the prison-house of God's wrath? Are the ordinary painstaking, honest, God-fearing members of the Church to be eternally lost because they are not heroes of sanctity, and mirrors of innocence and holiness? Are those who fill our churches and frequent the Sacraments and obey, at least in the main, all the commandments, to be damned? Are all but a solitary saint here and there to be cast away utterly? This would seem to be the logical consequence if we accept the teaching of those who deny purgatory. This is the awful conclusion to which a rejection of purgatory must inevitably lead us. For reason itself rebels at the notion of the imperfect being admitted to the embraces of God; our whole sense of God's inaccessible purity and holiness is shocked at the very sugges-

tion of such a union. We may not, we cannot entertain it: the notion is insupportable. So that *if* hell be the only alternative, to hell they must go: if the bottomless pit be the only other abode, *then* that must be their dwelling-place for ever and ever.

Ah! what a doctrine! A doctrine to freeze up the blood in one's veins; a doctrine without reason as it is without love. The fruit of the tree of heresy is indeed bitter; it is as gall and wormwood, and the breath of dragons; it can satisfy neither head nor heart.

How different is the sound Catholic doctrine! It neither outrages God's holiness on the one hand, by sending sinners directly into His presence, nor His mercy, on the other hand, by ejecting them directly into hell.

It declares that souls who depart this life with the stain of venial sin, or with forgiven mortal sins not fully atoned for, are detained for a season—for a longer or shorter period—according to their guilt, in the flames of purgatory, where they are cleansed from every defilement and every spot, and prepared for heaven. There they suffer the pangs of ungratified desire; there they are desolate with grief, because their sojourn is prolonged; there they are grievously afflicted because He who is to be their "reward exceeding great" is far from them, and they are shut out and deprived

for a time of their inheritance and portion in the land of the living. They thirst after Him whom their souls love, as the parched land thirsts for the autumn rains; they long for Him as the weary traveller longs for refreshment and shade; they pine for His possession as a mother pines for her lost, and only son; they are sick with grief as the bride when the bridegroom tarries. Ah! who will describe their anguish, who will express their bitterness? THEIR LOVE IS THE MEASURE OF THEIR DISTRESS; AND IN SO FAR AS A FINITE NATURE WILL PERMIT, THEIR LOVE IS PROPORTIONED TO ITS OBJECT; AND ITS OBJECT IS THE INFINITE GOD. God the unlimited, the boundless, the only absolute beauty. To measure their grief, then, we must measure God's loveliness; to gauge the depth of their pain we must sound the bottomless abyss of God's perfections. But who can do this? Let it suffice, then, to say that their pains are beyond all computation, and exceed all thought and power of utterance. Such, then, is the doctrine of the Church of Christ.

What a perfect flood of light it casts over the being of God. Into what startling relief it brings out the dazzling brightness of His purity which cannot suffer a sin-stained soul to approach it. How wondrously it reveals His hatred of sin and His abhorrence of all defilement! How it lights up, in a word, the whole position of God, and

points to Him as the centre and circumference, the beginning and end, the Alpha and Omega of all things! All things become desirable or undesirable, pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, merely as related to Him. His attitude determines and regulates all things, gives to them their fairness and attractions, clothes them with grace and beauty, and makes them what they are.

What is heaven itself? God securely possessed. What is hell? God eternally lost. And what is purgatory? God hidden: hidden for a time, as the sun is hidden by the passing clouds. When God is thus hidden, then the soul is deprived of light and warmth and beauty and comeliness, as the earth is deprived of beauty when night lies thick over mountain, plain and valley.

We may aid our suffering brethren by our prayers and sacrifices. These imprisoned souls are no strangers to us, but most dear and honoured friends. Heresy, thank God, has built up no impassable barrier between *us* and those we once knew and loved, and who have now passed away. They are still our friends, yea, more our friends than ever, and we may still extend towards them a helping hand in the hour of their trial. Let us hearken to their cry, "Have pity on me, at least you my friends," and do our best to succour them.

## CHAPTER IV.

### “LANGUISHING FOR LOVE,” OR THE PAINS OF PURGATORY.

“Where there is some order there is some good, but where there is no order there is no good.”—ST. AUGUST., *De natura Boni*, c. 23.

“La vertu n'est que l'amour de l'ordre.”—DE LAMENNAIS, vol. i., p. 90.

SORROW and joy, pleasure and pain, smiles and tears—such form the texture of every human life. But what is joy and what is sorrow? Who will explain either happiness or grief? At bottom no one can say what they are. Like sensation and consciousness, they are primary facts, not to be explained, but only experienced and accepted. Any attempt at an exhaustive analysis can only end in darkness and obscurity.

All we are able to do is to point to their source. Happiness is the music of the soul, and springs from harmony. It is the result of order, as unhappiness is the result of disorder.

God has created all things in “order, weight and measure”. He has established every being according to a definite plan and proportion; and all things stand in a certain well-defined relation to each other as well as to Himself. So long as these relations are duly preserved, peace and



happiness ensue ; when they are disturbed, happiness and peace give place to pain and anguish.

The greater the disturbance, of course, the more acute will be the pain : its climax is reached when the disturbance comes to affect and to interfere with that highest of all relations of which a rational creature is capable ; the relation between himself and God.

The soul is made for God. Not merely in the sense that all things whatsoever are made for Him, but in an immeasurably higher and stricter sense. It is made to know Him even as it is known ; to love Him with a love which is only less than infinite ; to possess and enjoy Him as its supreme, absolute and final end. This is the design of God in creating the soul of man ; and the order He has established. As its complete accomplishment and realisation constitute perfect and ineffable happiness, so, on the other hand, any departure from it engenders an agony, when understood, worse than death.

Hence it follows : to speak of heaven, hell or purgatory is but to speak of the relation of the soul and God, according as it is (1) in harmony, (2) out of harmony, or (3) temporarily disturbed.

Heaven is nothing more than the Creator and the creature, God and the soul, eternally united in their true relations. Hell is nothing more essentially than God and the soul eternally

severed; *i.e.*, their true relations irrevocably broken. And purgatory is merely this union between God and the soul temporarily checked. Hence, heaven is the state of eternal peace, tranquillity and order. Hell, on the contrary, is, in the words of the Holy Ghost, that "land of misery and darkness where the shadow of death, and *no order*, but everlasting horror, dwelleth" (Job x. 22). And purgatory is that place where disorder—not yet beyond remedy—is being gradually and painfully restored, and the proper relations adjusted; that place, in a word, where the soul has not yet actually found God, but is seeking Him; where some obstacle, some sin, imperfection, or moral defilement has arisen like an obstruction between the soul and God for whom it is made.

Since the soul is made for God, any obstacle to this union does violence to its inmost nature, and sets up a sense of agony within it, beyond the power of language to express.

Material objects and sensible things can indeed offer us but weak and unworthy analogies, but some shadow of the truth can be learned even from them. Consider pain in the body. Whence comes it? From some departure from the harmony pre-established by the Author of nature.

A dislocated bone is one which is out of place and moves not in its proper socket. It is a thing out of order. Pain ensues. Or to take another

instance; a nerve becomes exposed: its natural defence, its protecting envelope, has been worn through. A fierce throbbing agony is the immediate consequence. It is nature's cry for the restoration of order. Or a grain of sand, or a wandering mote, or some particle of foreign matter gets lodged between the eye and its lid, and again nature suffers because order is outraged. Take a last instance, *e.g.*, thirst. Thirst, when protracted, produces the most painful sensations. To what are they due? Merely to the absence of the moisture which the system, by its nature, requires. At first the agony is less intolerable, because there is not as yet complete absence. Some moisture still softens the glands and throat; but in proportion as even that is withdrawn by evaporation, the agony grows more and more unendurable, till at last madness comes on, and finally the longed-for relief of death.

The law is inexorable. Every departure from the harmony established is visited with its proportionate punishment. It is observable in the relations that exist between the limbs, muscles and other parts of our complicated bodies. But all such relations are trivial and unimportant when compared with the relation subsisting between the strong immortal soul and the eternal and infinite God. As that is a relation, unique, unparalleled and *sui generis*, so, too, any disturbance of it gives

rise to a pain as unique, as unparalleled and as essentially *sui generis*.

Reflect on the nature of the soul. Consider, on the one hand, its vast capacities, its unbounded powers of love, its everlasting life, its endless yearnings, its insatiable thirst, which creatures can indeed provoke, but never appease. On the other hand, contemplate God; His infinite beauty; His uncreated loveliness; His eternal truth; Him, for whom alone the soul is made; who alone can fill it, satisfy it, and inundate it; and then judge of the agony it must suffer if hindered in its search after Him.

To what can we compare a soul so situated? Nature can scarcely furnish us with an illustration. Perhaps we may liken it to the meteors or "falling stars," as they are popularly called, which fall within our atmosphere. A meteoric body flying through space is, in virtue of the law of gravity imposed by God, attracted by the earth. It obeys this law, and rushes towards the earth at a terrific rate—astronomers reckon it at over thirty miles a second! It thus precipitates itself upon the earth practically unimpeded till it enters the atmosphere surrounding our little planet. The atmosphere then checks its motion, acting upon it as a brake; the friction thus produced raises the meteoric body to an intense heat. It burns, melts, vaporises, dissolves, because its passage is re-

tarded. It glows at a white heat, grows incandescent, and at last becomes consumed by fire, on the one hand, because of the impetuosity of its flight towards the earth; and on the other hand, because that flight is partially arrested and retarded by the atmosphere. Did it seek the earth less ardently, or were there no atmosphere to interfere with its approach, it would not burn and glow so fiercely!

What a beautiful figure this is of the soul consuming with desire in the flames of purgatory.

So soon as the soul has shuffled off its mortal coil, it finds itself, so to speak, within the circle of God's attraction. It is impelled towards Him with the utmost violence as the meteor is impelled towards the earth. What now happens? There may be no grievous sin to raise an impenetrable obstacle—a wall of brass—between it and God. Nevertheless, if there be but venial sins, or but the slightest failing, but imperfections light as air, they will act upon it as the atmosphere upon the meteor—*i.e.*, check it, retard it, impede and interfere with its union with God, till in its anguish the soul burns and wastes away with unsatisfied desires until every trace of sin is at last purged out.

The violence with which God draws the soul to Himself is not merely different in kind, being spiritual instead of material, it is also different in degree, being, on the part of God, infinite. It would be infinite actually but for the limitation of



the creature. This secret of attraction, exercised by God over His reasonable creatures, resides in His perfections, which are without bound or limit. Without enumerating all the different perfections in which, for the sake of greater clearness, we are accustomed to divide the objectively indivisible perfection of God, we may find profit and instruction in dwelling for a few moments on the two which chiefly affect us, *viz.*, Beauty and Truth. They are the complements of our soul's twofold powers, mind and will. It is under the aspect of Infinite Truth that God fills, floods and overflows the intellect, ever pining for knowledge; and under the aspect of Infinite Beauty that He entrances, captivates and enthrals the heart or the will, ever pining and languishing for love.<sup>1</sup> "*Amore languéo*" (Cant. of Cants. ii. 5).

Of all powers, beauty—for beauty is a power—is the most mysterious, the most irresistible and the most subduing and fascinating. It conquers, but conquers without harshness, or violence, or pain. Its victories are all bloodless and peaceful. They provoke no resentment from the conquered. This is so because love does not seize and strain the body or afflict the limbs or the senses, mere servants of the will, but because it wins over the will itself, the master of the little microcosm, and

<sup>1</sup> "Amor non quiescit nisi in Amato, quod fit, cum obtinet Ipsum possessione plenaria atque pacifica."—B. Albertus Magnus, *ibid.*

when the will is gained, it carries all else with it, as the queen bee carries the swarm.

How little can a child, born and educated in some dark prison, know of the glory of the sun, either in the splendour of its rising, or in the magnificence and lustre of its setting, or in its noonday brightness when the arching heavens seem all ablaze and on fire—a child who has never seen but the one subdued ray that pierces dimly through the chink in his dungeon wall—yet he knows far more of the beauty of the sun than ever man can know of the beauty of God.

Of the ruder forms and grosser manifestations of mere material beauty, we may know something. We have, on the tropical sea, felt the beauty of the dawn of day; we have experienced the magical influence of the cloudless summer night; we have felt the spell of the sparkling waves and the scented air; and our heart has dilated and welled over at the beauty that love can trace in the welcome smile of some dear friend, met after years of troubled severance. Of created beauty we may speak, though even then in a subdued tone, but of God's beauty we can say nothing. Words fail us; and thoughts themselves grow dark. Some few instances seem to throw light on the nature of God's all-winning beauty till we begin to look into them, and then they, too, seem to fail us, and to afford us no solution. St. Peter, stand-

ing in the hall of Pilate, and denying with curses and oaths all knowledge of Christ, seemed wrought of iron; but as iron forgets its stubborn nature and runs like water when the bright flame meets it, so Peter melted and dissolved in tears at the glance, so full of reproachful love, cast on him by Jesus Christ. What a depth of beauty must have beamed in that momentary look! Yet that was even before His resurrection. So, again, when the three Apostles witnessed the beauty of Christ in His transfiguration, they became, as it were, dazed and stupefied, and would have remained rooted to the spot for ever. The sight seems to have emptied their minds of every earthly image. Forgetting the mission that had been committed to them, and the sternest duties and necessities of life, they cried out like men bereft of reason: "Let us make three tabernacles: one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias," as though that vision were to be eternal—as though they were to live on for ever and ever gazing on the glorious three. Yet Jesus Christ had not then ascended to the Father, and was still clad in His frail humanity, and did not even then reveal His Divine essence. So also we have innumerable instances in the lives of the saints. To St. Teresa, for example, it was once granted to see in vision merely the sacred hand of Jesus, her Beloved, and the sight at once threw her into an ecstasy, and caused

her to swoon away with transports of joy. That, however, was only a created hand, which God had made His own when He assumed our humanity.

To see God Himself in His own unfading beauty, infinite and uncreated, would wrench the very heart from our bosoms, and enkindle a fire of desire throughout every fibre of our being, more fierce than the sun at noon. It is that, in fact, which must actually take place when a soul enters into purgatory. The body is as a prison, shutting out the invisible beauty of God from the poor exile upon earth. Then death comes, and God sets the prisoner free. He walks out from darkness into light. And the instant in which the child of the Most High looks up into the face of its heavenly Father, its whole heart aches for Him. If its longing is denied it suffers purgatorial pains.

A longing—deep, insatiable, impetuous as a torrent, seething as the sea—fills his soul. Yet that longing is denied and thwarted, and the soul is held back by an omnipotent hand. Verily, an omnipotent hand. Nothing, indeed, but omnipotence could check and refrain an impetuosity so immeasurable, so all but infinite, which sways its whole being, and which will continue to torment it until at last, with boundless joy, it is allowed to plunge and lose itself in the limitless ocean of God's immensity, and to swoon away in eternal transports of joy on the bosom of the Beloved, the centre of its life, the end of its existence.

The very characteristic of beauty is to rejoice and cheer the heart. It is beauty's special prerogative to gladden. It is in itself joy-giving. It seems to feed the soul, to satisfy all its cravings, and to steep it in a sweet forgetfulness of all else. We feel no desire, save one. We ask no favour ; we demand no privilege but one alone, and that is to be allowed to stand and admire, and gaze on and on and on for hours, unmindful of the flight of time, and of all things else besides. If this can ever be the case with any earthly beauty whatsoever, and under any circumstances whatsoever, be they ever so exceptional, what must be the joy and gladness resulting, when the soul opens its eyes upon the uncreated and infinite beauty of God—compared to which all created loveliness is but hideous deformity ?

One thing is perfectly clear. If but once opened to the beatific vision, even but for one brief moment, the eyes of the soul can never close again without inexpressible pain. To close them and shut out that vision is agony. Not one instant's enjoyment of the sight of God can be forfeited without the acutest suffering. On this earth we may consent to live on without seeing God ; but this is solely because we have *never* seen Him. Once see God, then to live any longer without seeing Him is impossible ; for such a one all true life has ended. The soul may yet exist—



it *must* exist—but it is only in the throes of death. Eternal death is in fact nothing more than the eternal closing of the eyes upon the vision of God. Hence the eternal darkness. Hence, too, the unending death. *Mors depascet eos.*

Such is hell. On the other hand, so long as the eyes may yet hope one day to see, the soul is only in purgatory. The thought of that longed-for moment sustains it. Yet each successive instant that must first elapse flows by as an unmeasured sea of bitterness and grief. Yes! for to be restrained when we would feast on the glory of the Infinite is to suffer the pangs of an inconceivable hunger. The pains of sense, even of hell itself, are light and easy to support *compared to that*. Nothing but that seems *quite* unendurable. Ah! God, thou art verily our all. *Deus meus et omnia.* “The first and the last, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega.” Without Thee, all else is nothing. If Thou smile upon us, our joy overflows and drowns all care and sorrow. Hide Thy countenance for a moment, and we are troubled. Cast us off utterly, and we wither away.

Thus it appears to me that the doctrine of purgatory, rejected, scorned, derided though it be by hereties, reveals to us much of the grandeur and majesty of God, and illuminates in a marvellous manner the hidden depths of His Divine perfections. It is only because God is so infinitely de-

sirable that His absence is such an inexpressible torture. It is only because joy is so intense in heaven, that pain is so dire in purgatory. Were God less attractive, less lovable, less beautiful, the privation of His presence would be less agonising.

However great and intense may be the love which unites us to a human creature, in this world, we can, nevertheless, reconcile ourselves to his momentary absence, without dying of grief. Not so with the love which unites us to God. Not for one single moment can we bear to be parted from Him. No, not to win even a thousand worlds.

Once beyond the grave, and we have done with time. Eternity is ours, and eternity is so long. Is there not, then, we may ask, one brief instant of that endless duration that we shall be willing to spend out of His presence? No; a thousand times, no! emphatically and unhesitatingly, no! Not out of *His*. Out of other's, yes. Out of God's presence never, on any consideration. If every pebble upon every beach were made up of an infinite number of atoms, and if every atom were an eternity, and if all these eternities were at our disposal, we would never consent to spend so much as one second apart from God. Nothing would or could ever induce a soul that has once seen God face to face, freely to sacrifice a single instant's enjoyment of that vision, were it even for the sake of all the joys, delights, riches and

honours of the entire world, though they were to be possessed for ever. This would be to compare a created joy to an uncreated one. But to compare any created joy, or even the sum of all created joys with the joy of gazing upon the King in His beauty, is to institute a comparison where no comparison is so much as thinkable; between the creature and the Creator of all no comparison exists.

Many persons commend the mercy of God in hiding from our eyes the trials and sufferings that the coming years are destined to unfold to us day by day; but scarcely any one adverts to God's mercy in keeping from us all power of vivid realisation of the entrancing delights of heaven. But then men always will halt and fix their gaze upon the less, rather than upon the more marvellous actions of God. To conceal from us the temporal trials of life is no doubt to save us much present sorrow, but to conceal from our view the joys and ecstatic happiness of our eternal home is in sober truth to save us from the pains of hell itself, *viz.*, from the tortures of unsatisfied desires, which no words can describe, or mind conceive.

But, while our pen slips glibly over the paper, hundreds and thousands of our fellow-creatures are actually experiencing those very agonies which we have so vainly attempted to portray. They are learning, in all its awful naked truth, the full significance of that trite statement so often made, so seldom

considered, so constantly repeated, so persistently ignored, *viz.*, that the least deliberate, venial offence is a greater evil than all the accumulated miseries and merely temporal misfortunes of the world.

The intrinsic beauty of the Church's doctrines is in all respects most admirable ; but in those points where she more conspicuously parts company with the sects, her doctrine has ever struck us as not only beautiful, but as transcendently Divine, and as bearing upon them the seal of infallible truth.

Any (so called) religious body, rejecting the doctrine of purgatory, turns out of court one of the most eloquent witnesses to the personal loveliness and perfection of God, and destroys one of the most striking arguments in proof of His infinite sanctity and beauty. This we have striven to make clear in the present chapter, so far as purgatory is concerned. But it holds good in a greater or less measure of all those other doctrines which are more especially and exclusively Catholic. It holds good of the doctrine of devotion to our Lady ; the invocation of saints ; the granting of indulgences ; the Holy Eucharist ; the confessional ; the infallibility of the Pope, etc. ; though each in a different way, and from a distinct point of view.

A Church that would reject or deny these stands self-condemned ; a severed branch—a withered stem, arid and leafless. “A fixed figure for the hand of scorn to point his slow unmoving finger at.”

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SECRET WORKINGS OF DIVINE GRACE.

“Es ist selbstverständlich, dass die Einheit der Creatur mit Gott hier nicht im Sinne der Natur = Substanz-Einheit genommen werden kann, sondern dieser gegenüber als eine moralische, resp. Verhältniss-Einheit (*ένωσις σχετική*) bezeichnet werden muss.”

“Ebenso klar ist es aber auch, das sie nicht auf irgendwelche Einheit der Gesinnung beschränkt werden darf, sondern im Gegensatze zu dieser als eine natürliche Einheit (*unitas naturalis, ένωσις φυσική*) d.h. als Einheit der Gleichartigkeit des Lebens und als eine dieser Gleichartigkeit entsprechende Einheit innigster Verbindung zwischen dem Wesen Gottes als das Prinzip und Objekt des übernatürlichen Lebens der Creatur und der letzteren bezeichnet werden muss, wie sie dem auch von denn Vätern sehr oft genannt wird.”—Dr. M. SCHEEBEN, *Theol.*, vol. ii., p. 276, § 665.

HOW silently all the great forces of nature perform their appointed tasks! With what secrecy they carry out their various and often complicated operations! Consider the morning light. How softly it steals over the eastern mountains, driving before it the gruesome night, and arousing men to labour and toil; stirring into activity the sleeping cities and towns, and filling the streets and the market-places, the parks and the squares, with their bustling, noisy, restless throngs! Or even if we turn aside from the haunts of men, and wander into the deserted woods and forests in the early spring of the year, the same truth forces itself upon the observant



mind. How noiselessly the life-giving sap begins to stir in the lifeless trees, and in the long, naked stems and branches; how secretly it gathers in the roots and suckers, swelling and gaining strength till at last it forces its way beneath the hard, rough bark, pressing up from innumerable invisible capillaries through trunk, and branch, and slenderest twig—yea, to the furthestmost extremity of the topmost bough it works its way, carrying life, and vigour, and health, till the unnumbered buds burst forth, and the tender leaves unfold, and the whole forest becomes one vast sea of swaying green and waving branches.

Or consider even our own mysterious corporal life. How unobtrusive and hidden is the process of growth and development of the child into the man! How noiselessly the blood courses along through artery and vein; how secretly it bears nutriment and supplies to every organ; how silently and methodically it builds up, molecule by molecule, and fibre by fibre, bone, and muscle, and ruddy flesh—imparting vermilion to the lips and bloom to the cheeks, brilliancy to the eye, and strength and vigour to every limb! Yet how silently withal! How stealthily, how modestly is all this change brought about! Who ever stays to consider it? Who pauses to reflect upon it? The work is done in secret and without attracting the least attention or surprise.

If the action of God on material things is so secret and so silent, still more secret and silent is His action on the immaterial souls of men. We think not of it, nor do we pause to reason; but the most marvellous transformations are taking place all the while: transformations in our very soul, compared to which the transformation of the shapeless seed into the graceful and delicately tinted flower, or of the acorn into the majestic oak tree, is but insignificant.

And is it likely that we, who cannot follow God's hand as it moulds and fashions the simplest material form, should detect His far more subtle and spiritual action upon the immaterial soul of man while He transforms it by His grace? The soul is a spirit, and, consequently, invisible and impervious to the senses. We cannot see it; still less can we watch the action of grace upon it with our material eyes. No; "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke xvii. 20). Hence, if we are not at pains to learn what the Church teaches on this subject, we shall be in danger of letting life slip away without appreciating the choicest and greatest among the many gifts of God to man—the gifts He bestows upon us in the supernatural order.

Of these the only one we shall now touch upon is grace and some of its more direct consequences. What does Divine grace do for us? When a man

is first born into this world he appertains to the order of nature. Then grace comes and takes him, as it were, lovingly in its arms, and elevates him above the natural order on to a higher plane; placing him in the supernatural order—setting him in a position wholly and entirely above his own deserts and natural capacities; so far above them, indeed, that no power of man or angel, or of all men and angels combined, could so exalt him, but the power of God alone. This effect is not at once apparent to our dull intellects. It is as hidden as many of the differences existing in nature. Thus between an acorn which drops from an oak tree, and an acorn which is manufactured by the industry of man—carved from a piece of wood, or formed in a mould—there may not appear externally any very marked distinction. To the eye of a casual observer they will present much the same appearance, and one may pass for the other; but, in reality, what an immeasurable distance divides them.

The one contains a certain hidden virtue which enables it to develop into a superb oak—nay, give it time and it will expand into a forest covering many a square mile; but the other, its mere counterfeit, can never develop into anything. Whence this difference? The acorn produced by the oak contains a principle of life; that which man's cunning hath devised, in rude imitation, is dead and

destined only to corruption. This may serve as an illustration of the essential, though invisible, difference between a man in grace and a man devoid of grace. Though externally, and as far as the most careful examination can detect, the two are identical, yet, in reality, they are absolutely unlike. One possesses the principle of an eternal supernatural life; the other is without any such principle. As in a real acorn we have the promise of a future living oak, but find no such promise in its counterfeit, so, in the baptised child, we have a promise of an eternal life of glory in heaven, but no such promise in the unbaptised child.

Grace lifts us above nature—above the highest and sublimest nature. Consider for a moment what this means. In the order of creation the Angels are above man; still more raised above him are the Archangels; yet higher still the Thrones, Dominations, Principalities and Powers; and still more immeasurable does the distance grow as we approach the Cherubim and Seraphim who stand nearest to God; yet, when God's grace enters into the heart of man it raises him, as though by a single bound, far, far above the highest and sublimest even of the Seraphim and Cherubim, *when considered in their nature alone, and apart from grace.* In fact, the highest angel, considered in his own nature and abstraction made of his supernatural gifts, would be immeasurably

and incalculably below the least child on earth, in whose soul the grace of God resides as a principle of present life and future glory.

In fact, as Fr. Nieremberg, S.J., so forcibly remarks: "If all the perfection, excellence and beauty of all natures, *both existent and possible*, were all collected into one, it were all nothing in comparison of the least particle of grace, which gives a soul pre-eminence above all pre-eminences, and a beauty above all other beauties of nature. There is no resemblance betwixt God and all natural perfection; so he that is endowed with grace exceeds all the good that is found in creatures, for he is in a Divine degree." Hence it follows that "one man alone is more indebted to God for the least degree of grace than all creatures besides (from the Seraphim to the sands of the sea) for the creation of all other natures".<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the gift of grace is a far greater gift than that of creation, or, rather, it is like a new creation, but a creation into a higher order. It is literally being "born anew," in a spiritual sense; hence our Lord so speaks of it: "Unless a man be *born again* of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven". "Born again." What is the nature of this second birth? As in the first birth we are born children of Adam, so, in the second birth, we are born

<sup>1</sup> See *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*, chap. xii.



children of God. Not indeed by nature, but by grace. We become *adopted* children. As Jesus Christ is the natural and true Son of God, so we become sons by adoption; hence St. John says in the Gospel recited at the end of Mass: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, He gave them *power to be made the sons of God*" (John i. 11, 12).

This relationship with the Eternal and Omnipotent is an honour and a privilege, not fictitious and fanciful, but most true and well established, carrying with it all the special privileges and advantages of real sonship; such as a claim to the inheritance of sons, and the possession of God's paternal love in all its marvellous manifestations. Indeed it confers upon those who possess it a spiritual rank and dignity which no words can adequately describe, nor tongue utter, nor mind fully conceive. The relationship is indicated in many passages of Holy Scripture, and in various ways. Thus we are taught to address God in the most familiar of all prayers by the title of Father: "Our Father, who art in Heaven". So, again, the Apostle implies the same consoling truth when he speaks of the Incarnate Son of God as the "first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

This brings us to a second startling effect of Divine grace, *viz.*, the fellowship of Christ. By becoming the adopted sons of God we are made

brothers of the everlasting Son of the Father, *i.e.*, of Jesus Christ. A relationship quite without a parallel in its condescension, and breathing the most consummate love and affection. A relationship, too, which Jesus Christ, so far from repudiating, has sought still further to accentuate and intensify. He became man and a participator in our human nature so that we might become in a certain sense gods (*Dii estis*. John x. 34) and participators in His Divine nature; He took upon Himself the burden of our temporal life that we might one day possess eternal life; He embraced our poverty and miseries that we might one day share in His eternal riches and honours in the world beyond the grave—in short, there is nothing which He has not done to show all the affection, solicitude and interest of the tenderest of brothers towards each and every one of us. Men of the world are proud of noble ancestry, and exult if they can trace some connection, however remote, fanciful and far-fetched, with royalty; but what is there in all earthly ties compared to the honour of being by grace the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ? All other kinships are forgotten when we think of Him who has chosen to stand towards us in the relationship of a brother. Seeing how men value the tinsel honours and empty privileges that the accidents of birth or fortune confer, it seems a pity that preachers and teachers should

not insist more frequently and more earnestly upon the far more inestimable and enduring honours that accrue from the union by grace with Jesus Christ. The secret of sanctifying souls is surely not to ignore the natural desires and aspirations of the heart, but rather to direct them to their true objects and highest ends.

Further, grace makes us living tabernacles of the Holy Ghost. "Know ye not," asks St. Paul, "that you are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" The Holy Spirit enters into possession of the soul when it is filled with grace, and purifies, sanctifies and adorns it by His Holy presence; so that regenerated souls may say, in an altogether peculiar sense: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being". And where the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is, there also must be likewise, by concomitance, the Father and the Son. Hence our Lord says: "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will go to him, and We will take up our abode with him". Who can realise what it is to possess thus within our own souls the adorable Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Yet such is the happiness of every creature in a state of grace. God dwells within such a one, not merely by His operation, but substantially: "non per operationem tantum sed etiam per substantiam," as theologians teach. Hence the enormity of any offence committed by a soul in grace be-

comes intelligible, for such a one “defiles the temple of the Holy Ghost,” besides “crucifying to himself the Lord of Glory”.

This brings us to those remarkable words of St. Peter—words which no one can meet for the first time without emotion, and which are well calculated to fill any man of vivid faith with a perfect ecstasy of joy and jubilant wonder. In his second Epistle he says: “He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Peter i. 4). Partakers of the Divine nature: “*divinæ naturæ consortes*”—shares in the nature of God. This sublime doctrine is difficult to understand, and still more difficult to explain.<sup>1</sup> It undoubtedly indicates a most extraordinary and ineffable union between the soul and God. It is not that the soul, or any portion of it, actually becomes God, or loses its personality, or in any way forfeits its identity, but that God Himself enters into its innermost recesses, as it were, residing within it and flooding it with His Divinity, as the daylight floods and fills a clear and transparent crystal. Indeed, this is one of the illustrations actually made use of by the Fathers, so we may

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas gives us the key to the situation in the following words: “*Quia gratia supra naturam humanam, non potest esse, quod sit substantia, aut forma substantialis, sed est forma accidentaliter ipsius animæ. Id enim quod substantialiter est in Deo, accidentaliter fit in anima participante divanam bonitatem.*”

pause for a moment to consider it. When a pure crystal is exposed to the sunlight, the rays enter it, fill it, pervade it, and render it all bright, glittering and luminous. It is not itself the light, but the light is within it and around it, and shines through it, and pervades it in every part, so that we may say that it partakes of the nature of light; so does the Divinity shine through the soul and beautify it, clothing it with something of the beauty and comeliness of God Himself. Another example frequently made use of by the Fathers is that of a piece of metal at a white heat. The metal is metal still, even while it emits light and heat. Its nature is not changed, yet the heat possesses it. It is, as it were, penetrated with fire, and indistinguishable from it. It partakes of the nature of fire. As a piece of molten iron in the midst of the furnace, so is a soul in grace in the midst of God. It borrows beauty and magnificence from the presence of God Himself, so that this beauty and magnificence are the uncreated beauty and magnificence which are "from eternity unto eternity," and not the mere beauty and magnificence of the soul, though it is the soul that reflects it.<sup>1</sup> We say this just as we may say that the beauty

<sup>1</sup> The theologian Leonard Lessius, after speaking of this union, addresses God in the following prayer: "O admirabilem unionem! Per illam enim efficimur participes divinitatis, et omnium bonorum ac gaudiorum Tuorum; et per eandem divinitas Tua summe fulget extra se in speculo mentis creatæ, sicut intra se fulget sibi."



of the full moon is the beauty, not, strictly speaking, of the moon, but of the sun, since the moon possesses it *only indirectly and by reflection*. And as different bodies reflect the created light in different degrees, so may we say that different souls reflect in varying measure, according to their degree of grace, the uncreated Light of God, and so “differ as star differeth from star in glory”.

As the incandescent metal may be said “to share in the nature of fire,” so the soul is said, in the words of Holy Scripture, to become a sharer or participator in the Divine nature.

These and many other examples are made use of by the Fathers to illustrate the effects of Divine love on the human soul. Yet, though they may help us in a measure, they all fall far short of the truth, since we can never hope to know all the effects of grace till our eyes are opened in the next world, and we can see God “face to face,” and “know Him as we are known”.

Let it suffice to say that a soul in grace enjoys the special care and protection of God, who watches over it with more than paternal solicitude, so disposing, indeed, that all things whatsoever, without exception of any kind and whether prosperous or adverse, may be made to contribute to its essential and eternal happiness. In the words of the Holy Ghost, “all things co-operate unto good for such as are to be saved”.

Grace furthermore bestows a special knowledge<sup>1</sup> of spiritual things, and a power to discriminate between the precious and the vile—the gifts of heaven and the vanities and baubles of earth. “He that is of God knoweth the things of God.” This is shown to demonstration in innumerable examples of saints and heroes, who have testified by their lives and actions how immeasurably they valued the spiritual and supernatural above all the treasures and riches of earth. And if it gives knowledge, so does it impart strength to act up to that knowledge. If we wish to witness the power of grace, and see, as it were, for ourselves the valour and courage it bestows, we have but to turn to the lives of the martyrs and confessors. Consider the constancy with which they went forth to meet death in its most hideous and cruel form, and the calm and peace—nay, the positive joy they exhibited—in the midst of torture and agony which exceed all words. Not strong men alone, but delicate women, tenderly brought up, sensitive and weak—yea, and children, too, unused to suffering and the sight of blood—stood unconquerable before their tormentors, and could be subdued neither by fire nor sword, nor the worst forms of persecution. The weakest by nature became the strongest by grace, and characters accustomed to shrink from every pain and

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas speaks of grace as “*quædam lux animæ*”.

infliction grew under its mysterious influence, robust and indifferent to torture and death. The grace of God is above all power, and must triumph over all opposition, if corresponded with, for it is the power of the Omnipotent.

Let us conclude by one last reflection. The grace of God in the soul renders it so near and dear to Him that He views its every action and thought in a wholly special way. God becomes, as it were, enamoured with a soul in grace; He looks down upon it with tenderness, and is wholly conquered by the beauty with which He has decked it, so that not only the soul, but every act of the soul, becomes pleasing and gratifying to him. The least act, were it but an aspiration or a kind word, when performed (1) by one in grace and (2) from a supernatural intention, is of greater value, before God, than the greatest and noblest action performed by one in sin, or even by a soul free from sin if devoid of all supernatural grace.<sup>1</sup> All of us have probably sometimes sighed in our childhood for the fabulous philosopher's stone, which is said to possess the property of converting whatever it touches into gold. Far more marvellous is the power actually possessed and exercised by a soul in grace of converting every

<sup>1</sup> In the present order of things a human soul "free from sin" yet "devoid of grace" does not, of course, exist. The case is therefore merely hypothetical.

act it performs into a priceless treasure—into an eternal weight of glory. Yet this we know to be the simple, unvarnished truth taught by the Church.<sup>1</sup> Every pain, cross or affliction, however slight, if borne for the love of God by a soul in grace, is more pleasing to Him, and better in itself, than the conquering of a kingdom or the ruling of an empire, when such acts are not inspired by a supernatural motive. Thus is our future life made dependent upon our present. Thus it is that day by day and week by week are being wrought within our souls the principles and seeds of future glory and happiness. How silently does the work proceed, and how secretly God operates His wonders. Yet how certainly is His hand ever upon us all our lives long, transforming and beautifying us, if we place no obstacle in the way and resist not His operation!

Who, appreciating this truth, could allow himself to grow remiss or lukewarm in guarding and defending so priceless a treasure? If men “did but know the gift of God,” they would surely take considerably greater pains in securing its preservation, especially considering the fragility of the vessels in which so inestimable a treasure is carried.

Men are always glad to hear of what redounds

<sup>1</sup> See Council Trid., Sess. vi., can. 32, and commentators on that canon.

to their own honour and advantage. Even the most scoffing democrat would possibly think better of crowns and coronets were they placed more within his reach, and so would Christians esteem more highly the supernatural gifts of God were they made more fully sensible of their actuality, and more fully aware of the power they possess to acquire them in a higher and yet higher degree.

Even among reflecting men, not one in five thousand realises the honour, privilege and dignity that grace confers. We priests, with all our familiarity with theological works and spiritual books, can hardly be said to bring the truth home to ourselves. But if this be true of those whose very profession supposes greater knowledge, what shall we say of the masses of the faithful? What of the multitudes whose lives are passed in work and toil and bitter privation? Is it not our duty to point out oftener than we do those truths which are joy-giving and sustaining—truths which cause the heart to bound with delight and the spirit to rise in wonder and gladness, even in the midst of earthly sorrows?

The anger of God upon unrepenting sinners is a familiar theme with most preachers, and the pains and penalties of the lost are often depicted with considerable warmth and vividness. But the more attractive truths of the Gospel—those truths



which melt the hearts of men rather than break them—are seldom put so prominently forward, and make but little impression. As none need the solace that these truths bring as much as the sorrow-laden and the miserable, so, when duly represented, none grasp at them more readily or embrace them more eagerly.

The heart is made for happiness and joy. The more completely, therefore, earthly consolations are withheld and denied, the more readily will it accept and treasure up the promise of a joyous hereafter, and the more fervently will it cherish that inward and invisible grace which is, as it were, an earnest of an eternity of peace and delight in the Kingdom of the Father.

## CHAPTER VI.

### UNION WITH GOD.

“Creatura est anima a Deo; vita a Vita; simplex a Simplici; immortalis ab Immortali; magna a Magno; recta a Recto; eo magna, quo capax aeternorum; eo recta quo appetens supernorum; eo beata, quo Deo unita.”—ST. AUGUSTIN.

THE smallest trivialities suffice to amuse and entertain a child, because its mind is too feeble and undeveloped to grasp the great questions that are ever agitating the world. A rattle or a penny trumpet will absorb its entire attention, and it will be quite content to while away its time digging in the sand with a wooden spade, or erecting imaginary castles and palaces with packs of cards. One may speak to it of bloody encounters actually taking place on land and sea; one may apprise it of events entailing the ruin of nations or the disgrace of peoples; one may describe the disintegration or total destruction of an empire; but it signifies little. So long as one does not seize its playthings, nor shatter its toy-house, one will scarcely trouble the infant, or even chase away the smile of joy from its face. It will continue its play with undistracted glee. The grown-up man, on the contrary, can no longer find any pleasure or interest in the playthings of a child. His mind is too full of

wider, deeper and more momentous thoughts— involving, perhaps, the welfare of his country or the peace of the world.

Now, from a spiritual point of view, the great masses of mankind closely resemble children playing upon the sand. They, too, occupy themselves in trivialities. The present moment absorbs their attention. All their thoughts, all their desires, are centred on the passing and unstable things of time. Some deliver themselves up, body and soul, to money-making, and are wholly preoccupied in adding field to field and house to house, much as the child collects shells, or throws up mounds of sand, to be scattered by the fast incoming tide. Others engage themselves in seeking honours, distinctions and decorations, and will lend an eager ear to the praise and flattery of men, with the same self-satisfied contentment with which a child will allow itself to be beguiled by the sound of a rattle, or the hum of a top.

The world, the pleasures of the world, the riches of the world, the honour, the distinctions, the glory, and the approbation of the world—such things gain possession of the hearts of the multitude. Perishable goods, fleeting pleasures, transitory fame! The glitter and the glare, the gilt and the tinsel, the meteoric splendours and phosphorescent glory of the vain frivolous world engross them, occupy them, interest them, excite

them, control them, tyrannise over them, provoke their passions, stimulate their greed, arouse their desires, and drive them to the very ends of the earth in hot eager pursuit of fleeting shadows and bursting bubbles!

Children, every one! Infants playing with their toys—foolish, unreflecting, unreasoning—ready to start off in pursuit of every painted butterfly that chance sends fluttering and flittering across their sunlit path—children who refuse to be distracted or disturbed by anything of true importance. The deepest problems of life, the momentous questions of a future state, the solemn and all-important facts of the eternal and invisible world, awake no interest. Speak in the most persuasive tones of the most sublime and awful truths that can occupy the heart of man; of crimes that will re-echo through endless ages; of wounds which eternity itself cannot heal; of millions upon millions of sensitive human beings descending into the extinguishable lake of fire; of a heaven to be won, and a hell to be avoided—yes, speak on; “cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet”; and, behold, they still play on with the gewgaws and trumperies of life, as deaf and unheeding as plays the unreasoning child when you tell him that cities burn and nations perish.

To a man of vivid faith there is nothing so extraordinary or so appalling as the apathy, indiffer-

ence and insensibility of worldly-minded men to all that is most vital and significant, most essential and paramount. The saints of God, though in many respects like to us, and moulded out of the same clay, seemed to live and move in a wholly different world. They looked beyond the present into the far-off future. The riches and honours and glory of the world were, no doubt, spread out and flaunted before *them* as before us. These things they indeed beheld, as they beheld the crimson and golden clouds floating in the western sky—beautiful, if you will—yea, gorgeous beyond all comparison; but perishable and passing, and unworthy of more than a momentary glance. Such coveted objects came to tempt the saints as they come to tempt others, but in their case without success. They heeded them not, but brushed them aside without a sigh. Their thoughts were too much taken up with more important matters to heed such peurile distractions—too much preoccupied with great and eternal truths; with heaven and its unfading glory, its never-ending delights, its enduring and ineffable peace; with hell and its quenchless fires, its undying worm of remorse, its ceaseless, changeless, pitiless woe and misery. How could a saint become captivated or ensnared by earthly joys whose eyes were ever riveted on joys celestial? How could he be terrorised or coerced by thought of earthly pains or



worldly shame, or in any way swayed by the scorn or hate of men, whose mind was ever contemplating the terrors of the lost, and the shame and torments and never-ending despair of the stygian pit? No. The earth beneath his feet must ever remain a poor and contemptible object to one whose innermost thoughts are habitually fixed on the everlasting throne of the infinite God. To one who has heard "the voice of the Beloved, leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills," the praises and adulation of the crowd must ever sound empty as the murmurs of the idle wind, meaningless as the souging of the restless sea; while the glory of the world, when compared with the splendours of the heavenly palaces, can never seem more than the finery and vulgarity of a village fair.

In a word, a saint lives and moves among realities, while other men live and move among shadows, phantoms, and empty shows. A man of God appraises all things at their just value. He scans the entire earth; his eagle glance sweeps from pole to pole, and his subtle and penetrating eye at once perceives that in the midst of such an overwhelming variety of objects but one is truly valuable; but one stands out peerless and without a rival. "On earth," he exclaims with the poet, "there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind;" or, let us rather say, soul.

The soul! A single soul—the soul of the merest child, yea, of a poor, ignorant, ragged, deformed, outcast child, the poorest and lowliest throughout all London—is, indeed, worth more than towns and cities, and all that they contain; worth more than thrones and dynasties, kingdoms and empires; yea, more than glowing sun and glistening moon, and the countless host of diamond stars glimmering and sparkling on the brow of night, and quiring to the cherubim! Of all created things on earth, the soul alone lives a charmed life. It alone is immortal and imperishable. All else must pass; all else must fall, and fade, and cease to be. The hardest rock, the toughest metal, the firmest wall of adamant, must crumble away. Weakness, frailty, change, dissolution, decay and death! Ah! these are words clearly inscribed and engraved by the hand of Omnipotence on everything around us and about us. The soul is the only exception. It, and it alone, survives them all. It will endure; it will never pass away. Nations will come and go; dynasties will rise and fall; the mountains will be broken into pieces; the seas will evaporate and disappear; the earth itself will dissolve; the very stars shall fall from heaven; all creation will sway and totter to its ruin; the entire universe shall be gathered up like a scroll; but in the midst of the general destruction and universal change the soul

will retain its youth and beauty, and never, never know corruption.

The soul! Oh! who will endow us with power to understand its worth and dignity? Who will furnish us with the means of portraying, even in a limited degree, its exquisite grace and unrivalled loveliness? Impossible in this life! To understand the loveliness of the soul we must understand the loveliness of God, for to His image and likeness it is made. All things, of course, babble in an inarticulate manner of Him who made them. The wide-stretching ocean fills our ears with distant murmurs of His immensity; the soft-scented summer's breath discourses of His gentleness; the scintillating stars emit subdued glimpses of His beauty; and the tropical noon-day sun, as it sets the heavens in a blaze, seems to reflect something of His magnificence.

Nature in all its moods, and poetry and art, music and song, in all their varied forms and infinite expressions, seem to lisp His name; while earth and sky utter His praises and show forth his wondrous perfections. True. Yet not one of these—no, nor even all these put together—can tell us as much of God as could a single human soul in grace, were we but able to contemplate it in itself, and to understand and see it in its very essence, as we may one day hope to do in our home of light above.

Put all the visible creation on one side. Add world to world, and universe to universe, till mind grows weary and senses fail; place these accumulations of wealth and beauty on one side of the balance, and on the other lay but a single soul, clothed with the garment of grace. It will outweigh them all. For, as theologians teach, "one particle of Divine grace outvalues all the treasures of nature".<sup>1</sup>

God became incarnate for the sake of souls. The least soul has been purchased by the life-blood of an Infinite Being. There is nothing of such value. In fact, as compared with it, all else must be esteemed as just nothing at all. It is almost terrifying to think of the treasure we carry about in such fragile vessels. A shudder runs through our frame, and our heart's blood seems almost to cease flowing, as we contemplate the awful responsibility that is ours, and the irrevocable choice that awaits our decision, and on which an eternity, with all its fathomless heights and depths, lies balancing.

Every Catholic, duly instructed, knows and believes this. It is the teaching of the Church. The saints did more than merely know and believe. They likewise realised it. With them it was a practical truth, one that affected them, and exercised a most perceptible influence on their lives and actions.

<sup>1</sup> "Bonum *gratiæ* unius majus est quam bonum *naturæ* totius universi."

They argued: 1. The earth harbours nothing half so precious as a human soul. 2. It is made to the image of God. 3. It is redeemed by the death of the Infinite. 4. It is destined to bask for ever in the sunshine of God's presence, etc. Such was their premise. The consequence was an easy one to draw, *viz.*, since the soul is all this, and far more, then it must follow that the noblest, highest and most blessed and privileged work is to help souls, to labour and toil for them, and to devote one's life, talents, wealth, strength and means to their service. It was thus that all the saints argued, and it was upon this principle that they all acted, each according to the measure of his opportunities.

We have a notable example in St. Charles Borromeo. Being a great saint, he was, as a consequence, marvellously illuminated in spiritual things; and being thus illuminated from above, he was enabled to recognise beyond others the incomparable beauty of a soul. He used often to enlarge on this topic, and to point out that "it is worth more than all the treasures of the world, as the devil well knows, who is so eager for its damnation. A single soul," he exclaimed, "is worth the continual care of a pastor." On one occasion when he was trying to prevail upon a bishop to reside more continuously in his diocese, the latter excused himself, urging, as a plea, that his diocese



was but small, and could easily be managed by others. The saint, who was extremely grieved to find a prelate with so little pastoral zeal, made answer: "A single soul is worthy of the continual presence and guardianship of a bishop" (*Life*, p. 389). He not only manifested this zeal himself in his most laborious and incessant efforts to bring about the salvation of souls, but he strove by every means in his power to infuse a corresponding zeal into the hearts of all others, and especially into the hearts of his priests. On one occasion, in the diocesan synod, he placed before the clergy the example of St. Catherine of Sienna, in whom this zeal was so ardent that she offered herself to God to suffer the pains of hell in order to save souls who were on their way thither. After mentioning this fact he cried out with much fervour: "Oh, zeal, worthy of imitation by all Christians! if we could understand what it is to deliver a soul from hell, I doubt not but many of us would risk any danger in hope of saving at least one".<sup>1</sup> How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace! No wonder, added St. Charles, that holy virgin of Sienna knelt down and kissed the very ground that had been trodden on by preachers because they were fellow-labourers of Christ. "There is nothing more pleasing to God,"

<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa writes: "To save even one I would most willingly endure many deaths."

he continues, "than to be helpers of His Son, and to be willing to undertake the charge of souls. Our holy Mother the Church rejoices in nothing more than in those who bring souls again to spiritual life, thereby despoiling hell, defeating the devil, casting out sin, opening heaven, rejoicing the angels, glorifying the Blessed Trinity, and preparing for themselves an unfading crown" (see *Life*, p. 370). Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit Himself who assures us that "they that instruct many unto Justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3).

It would be impossible, within the narrow limits at our disposal, to narrate the many instances of the saint's untiring zeal for the salvation of the brethren. Let it suffice to say that their spiritual welfare was his continual thought night and day, and that both by word and example he ever strove, with unflagging energy, to win men to God. No opportunity was allowed to pass, no occasion was suffered to go by without being turned to the profit and advantage of his people.

When travelling in the mountains he was wont to stop and hold converse with any of the poor mountaineers he chanced to meet, and stir up their faith and fervour by exhortations on spiritual things. Or he would gather a number of poor children together and teach them in simple words the Christian doctrines, and then present them

with a little reward to give them courage and to stimulate their piety. Once when he was visiting the Levantine valley on foot, seeing a ragged little urchin sitting near a wretched hovel at some distance from the road, he went up to him, and though he was but a poor little child brought up among cattle and covered with dirt, he remained for some time by his side, and taught him, with great charity and sweetness, to say the Our Father and the Hail Mary. His desire to assist souls for whom Christ died was, indeed, coextensive with humanity. He seemed to include in his solicitude every inhabited part of the world. He strove to benefit every country, so far as it was possible; and for that purpose he kept up a continuous correspondence with bishops and archbishops, even in distant sees.

The example of St. Charles is, in a greater or lesser measure, the example of every saint. Nor could this be otherwise, for the love of our fellow-men is a test, as well as a testimony, of our love of God. And in proportion as our love of God gains strength and power will our love of the men and women, for whom He was crucified, likewise increase and strengthen.

One of the saddest and most deplorable facts forced upon our attention at the present day is the extraordinary little interest in man's salvation exhibited by people living in the world. We are

not now referring to Anglicans, Wesleyans, Methodists and others who are dwelling in the twilight of heresy. We refer to Catholics who live and bask in the full brilliancy of the light of Divine truth, and who might, therefore, be expected to be more filled with apostolic charity, and more inflamed with zeal for the hundreds of thousands perishing in their very midst.

It is only natural that a man, who is at no pains to learn the unspeakable value of his own soul, should set but a low price upon the souls of his neighbours. One who is making no notable effort to ward off sin and defilement from himself, and to preserve himself from every stain, is not likely to put himself out to any great extent to rescue his neighbours from contagion. Nor will a lukewarm Catholic, who displays no ardent aspirations and longings after perfection and a greater union with God, develop any marked zeal for the sanctification of his fellows.

No, we must commence with ourselves. "Well-ordered charity begins at home,"<sup>1</sup> as St. Thomas teaches. We must start with a strong sense of the exalted dignity and measureless greatness and beauty of our own soul when in a state of grace; we must grow familiar with the fact that it is veritably a child of heaven, an adopted son of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, and an heir to

<sup>1</sup> "Charitas bene ordinata incipit a semetipso."

an everlasting throne, and a participator of the Divine nature. Then, but not till then, shall we be in a condition to appreciate at the same time the dignity and value of the souls of our brethren, made, as our own, to the image and likeness of God; and, as our own, purchased by the blood of an infinite Victim. When once that startling truth is borne in upon us we shall certainly be the first to admit that no work or employment is so grand and ennobling in itself, so pleasing and gratifying to God, so honourable to ourselves or so profitable to others, as that which may promote the eternal welfare of the race.

Some Catholic laymen seem to think that such reflections have no application except to bishops, priests, monks and nuns, and to persons especially consecrated to God. What a mistake! Are not the multitudes scattered throughout the world their brethren as well as ours, and just as truly as they are, children of the one Eternal Father above? Are they not equally redeemed by the same saving Blood, and destined to the same sublime honours and rewards in the realms of fadeless glory in heaven? And have they not as much right to claim the interests and sympathy and solicitude of Catholic laymen as of priests and monks? Or, are lay people to watch the ravages of sin, and to contemplate the sea of iniquity raging on all sides, and souls perishing before



their eyes, and to extend no hand to help a drowning brother, and to make no effort to rescue the perishing? In the midst of this wild, tempest-tossed, wind-swept, storm-driven world, are lay people to sit idly by, and fold their arms unconcerned, and throw the entire responsibility and care upon the priests? No! To look upon the cross of Christ, and to witness what He suffered for man's redemption, is to feel the necessity of co-operating with Him to the utmost of one's power. All good laymen feel the truth of this when it is properly put before them. What many need is merely that some one should point out to them *what* they might do, and the *value* of the least work undertaken for the spiritual welfare of their neighbors.

They often ask, in diffident tones: "Ah! yes; but what can *we* do? We can neither preach, nor absolve, nor offer up the Adorable Sacrifice. We can effect so little." It might be retorted—Because you can do but little, is that any reason why you should do nothing? But, in sober truth, there is nothing little in any act or word that contributes, however slightly, to a soul's salvation; nothing trivial, nothing insignificant; nay, on the contrary, the smallest act is of inestimable value. And this is what, it appears to me, they should be made to realise. Is it not a great thing to enrich the poor; to feed the multitudes; to cure diseases; to

still tempests; to create worlds; or to build up a universe? If so, it is a far greater thing still to diminish sin; to draw souls to God; to extend the faith; and to engraft virtue and eradicate vice. How clearly the saints understood this! "To make one step in the propagation of the faith," says the generous-hearted St. Teresa, "and to give one ray of light to heretics, I would forfeit a thousand kingdoms!" (*vide Life*, chap. xxi.). It is of faith that one deliberate venial fault is an immeasurably worse evil than all physical pains, and than all material loss that man can sustain in this life; and far more deserving of tears and lamentations. If this be absolutely certain it must be at least equally certain that to labour to diminish sin, infidelity, religious indifference, and neglect of spiritual duties, is a work of the very highest value and importance. If by the end of our lives we have succeeded in reducing the sum-total of sins against God but by one we shall not have lived in vain. Yet, if in earnest, the least influential amongst us may do vastly more than that. And how? the earnest layman may inquire. Then let me answer.

First, by preaching. Not in words, not in rounded periods, and balanced sentences, and rich sonorous phrases, but by the far more efficacious means of example. No words are half so eloquent or half so persuasive as facts. A good life is a continuous exhortation. No man can live among men as a

true, fervent, practical, honest and sober Catholic without doing incalculable good. It is impossible. The mere presence of a noble, upright, generous character, who would scorn to do a mean, unworthy action, is itself a spur and an incentive to virtue. Such a man inspires respect, admiration and reverence; and from admiration and reverence to imitation and emulation there is but a short and easy step. We instinctively seek to imitate what we admire, and to resemble those whom we esteem and honour.

Secondly, by showing, in a practical manner, some real interest and concern in the spiritual welfare of others, and desiring to be of use to them. Opportunities arise again and again of helping inquirers and assisting the spread of truth; explaining difficulties, dissipating doubts, answering objections, interpreting apparent contradictions; and, in a word, of giving a clear and intelligible account of the faith that they profess. If Catholic laymen could be persuaded to interest themselves more in studying the Apologetics, the *motiva credibilitatis*, the history of the Church, and of the Church's doctrine, and a score of kindred subjects, they might render invaluable service to souls.

Thirdly, by employing more generously in the service of the brethren whatever special gifts and talents they may possess. How much might be

done by possessors of large fortunes to advance the reign of Christ upon earth! What real assistance they might render to struggling missions, poverty-stricken churches, and schools, and to institutions at home, as well as to the important missionary enterprises in far distant and inhospitable lands! Much, no doubt, is lost by the injudicious application of charity; and much is spent to carry out a whim or a personal hobby, which might have been laid out to far greater advantage, so far as souls are concerned. But of this we will not now speak. Others, again, who are blessed with intellectual gifts—with learning, leisure and ability—might, surely, find abundant scope and occupation for their talents in other directions. To show what we mean we need but mention such names as Digby, Allies, W. G. Ward, E. H. Thompson, C. F. Allnatt, O. A. Brownson, F. Ozanam, De Renty, Bernieres de Lourvigny, Du Pont (the holy man of Tours), the Comte A. de Mun, the late Herr Windhorst, to whom might be added very many others, and women as well as men.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, by throwing themselves generously into every good movement that is started with the approbation of authority, and uniting their efforts

<sup>1</sup> The zeal and devotion, even of certain non-Catholics, such as the late Lord Shaftesbury and the Quakeress Mrs. Fry, might bring a blessing to many a Catholic.

with those of others to make it a success. How frequently it happens that some enterprise, excellent in itself, and admirably conceived and planned, nevertheless proves abortive and fails because Catholics prefer to criticise rather than to co-operate, and to raise objections rather than to raise subscriptions. It would be impossible to enumerate the various useful works and ventures to which the past five and twenty or fifty years have given birth, and which require the zeal and generosity of the faithful if they are to continue to succeed; but perhaps we may venture to mention one or two as specimens of the rest. There is, *e.g.*, the Catholic Truth Society. It does an admirable work. And it may be helped in such a variety of ways. The rich may aid it by donations; the learned and leisured by writing tracts, papers and essays; the poor by buying the leaflets, which cost next to nothing, and scattering them among their friends and acquaintances; and all by speaking well of it and wishing it God-speed. Then there are Catholic papers which need support; and from time to time series of instructive lectures or addresses are arranged which (*a*) some might assist in delivering; which (*b*) others might encourage by attending, and which (*c*) all could help by advertising and making known among their companions. In fact, to one who



ardently desires to help his brethren, thousands of ways lie open.

Fifthly, by encouraging and fostering religious and priestly vocations among the young. When parents are true, fervent Christians themselves, and Catholics to their very heart's core, they will certainly realise how unspeakable and unparalleled an honour and blessing it is to be able to reckon among their children at least one or two consecrated and dedicated to God and the service of the altar. Such parents will strive, by the simple force of word and example, to infuse their own spirit into their offspring, and again and again their ardent and continued prayers will obtain for son or daughter the gift of a supernatural vocation. The extraordinary thing is—first, that even fathers and mothers who are supposed to estimate spiritual things with some degree of accuracy should often be so little anxious to see their children raised to the sublimest of all dignities, *viz.*, to the unapproachable dignity of the priesthood; and, secondly, that even among the better class of young men themselves so few should be stirred by this noblest form of ambition.

“The real misery of the Church,” Cardinal Mermillod justly observes, “is to see how young men of the upper classes seem to be incapable of anything better than driving four-in-hand, shooting a cover, or applauding an actress. The honour

of taking and holding the Blood of Jesus Christ is not given to them. Whole generations pass away before a family gives one son to the Church. Christian women!" he exclaims, "your mother hearts do not burn enough with Divine love that their exhalations should bring forth the heart of a priest. Oh! ask of God that your families may give sons to the Church . . . ask Him that you, in your turn, may have the courage of sacrifice, and that from you may be born an apostle: to speak to men about God, to enlighten the world, to serve Him at the altar. Is not this, after all, a grand and magnificent destiny?" (*vide* Mermillod on *The Supernatural Life*). Truly a more magnificent one does not exist.

"It is beautiful that a man stand and speak of spiritual things to men" is the sentiment of even the wise old cynic of Chelsea. "A man even professing, and never so languidly making still some endeavour to save the souls of men; contrast him with a man professing to do little but shoot the partridges of men!"<sup>1</sup>

The last, but by no means the least important, means of co-operating with Jesus Christ in the work of saving souls, is frequent and fervent prayer. "The continuous prayer of a just man availeth much." To assist one another in this way is, indeed, a sacred duty; it is a special ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Past and Present*, bk. iv., chap. i., p. 208.

hortation of the Apostle: "Pray for one another, that you may be saved". It is, furthermore, suggested by our Lord Himself when He teaches us to say, not, "deliver *me*," but "deliver *us* from evil," and not "lead *me*," but "lead *us* not into temptation," and so forth.

It appears that we priests do not take sufficient pains to impress upon the faithful the duty of laboring according to their opportunities for the salvation of souls; nor do we sufficiently encourage them by pointing out and insisting again and again on the real value of the least act performed with this end in view. Perhaps if we were more zealous ourselves we should be more careful and solicitous to secure the valuable co-operation of every good man and woman, and more anxious to instil into them an active and self-sacrificing charity. *Qui non ardet, non accendit.* If we are to lead others to exert and strain themselves in this Divine and inestimably grand work, it is imperative that we first lead the way, and by vigorous action rather than by speech. "Not the cry, but the flight of the wild duck," says the Chinese proverb, "leads the flock to fly and to follow."



*PART THE THIRD.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RIDDLE OF LIFE.

“Well! Life is a quaint puzzle. Bits, the most incongruous, join in each other, and the scheme thus gradually becomes symmetrical and clear; when lo! as the infant claps his hands and cries ‘See! see! the puzzle is made out!’ all the pieces are swept back into the box—the black box with the gilded nails.”—LORD LYTON.

**I**T is man’s wont to conceive an absurdly exaggerated view of his own importance, and too often to forget what an exceedingly insignificant little creature he really is, considered in himself. In the display of this conceit and vanity he not unfrequently puts us in mind of the barn-door cock, which (according to George Eliot) believed the sun arose each morning for the express and sole purpose of hearing it crow!

To help us to arrive at a somewhat juster estimate of our true position in the vast creation, let us begin by making a supposition. We will suppose that by some Divine power we are carried away bodily from the earth and deposited upon the Polar Star. Looking down from such coign of vantage we gain a magnificent view of the whole mechanism of the planetary systems. Granted the possession of suitable eyes, we at once behold countless constellations, groups of

stars, and vast systems of planets on all sides of us. Amongst these we soon detect our own beautiful sun, bright, glistening and fiercely incandescent. Revolving round it, as a centre, we contemplate the four gigantic planets, Neptune, Uranus, Saturn and Jupiter. Round and round they sweep at a terrific pace, in circles of literally thousands of millions of miles in circumference.

A more careful and minute inspection finally reveals to us yet another planet. It is small, indeed, as compared with the four above mentioned, and insignificant in the extreme—so small, in fact, that twelve hundred, all rolled into one, would be needed to make a single star equal in size to Jupiter, and almost as many to construct one of the dimensions of Saturn. What is this poor little revolving speck, looking like a grain of dust, and almost lost amid the vast number of greater and grander orbs? It is our earth; the world on which we dwell. From our supposed position on the Polar Star it seems the merest point; yet round and round it sweeps about the sun, floating without any visible support through the aerial wastes, bearing on its surface not only seas and mountains, rivers and lakes, forests and plains, but a living freight of over a thousand millions of human beings, together with the towns and cities in which they live; the great seaports, with their shipping and their merchan-

dise; and the teeming, busy emporiums of trade and commerce, industry and business. The whole is tearing through space at a pace immeasurably faster than the swiftest bullet ever projected from a cannon's mouth.

Contemplated from this point of view the earth is no longer the important planet we at first supposed. Compared with the rest of creation the entire world is less than a tiny particle of dust or a single drop from some vast ocean. Yet in this tiny world man works out his destiny; it is the seat of his present life, labour and love. Having gazed intently upon the earth, as seen from afar, let us now draw nearer, and imagine to ourselves a little child just born into it. Consider the natural working of its mind. For in this child we see an image or type of ourselves, and may study the promptings and gropings of every human soul. On its first entry into this world it is carried along, like an unconscious thing, amid the stream of events and circumstances that surround it. As years, however, pass away a change takes place. Not only does the body develop, but the powers of the mind also unfold. Reason gradually begins to dawn. Like the first faint gleams of morning stealing over the eastern hills, and heralding the day, come the early promptings and inquiries of the young child, heralding the dawn of reason; and as the seasons

slowly succeed one another, reason develops and strengthens ever more and more.

Looking with wondering eyes over the earth the child gazes out far and wide upon all around it: the wide-stretching plains, the deep sonorous seas, the snow-capt mountains, etc. And, as it gazes, strange thoughts like shadows flitter through its mind and provoke its interest and curiosity—and a number of burning questions begin to stir within its innermost soul, till at last they formulate themselves in words, and the child pauses to inquire: *How* did I get here? *Who* placed me here? *What* am I here *for*? *Whence* have I come? *Whither* am I going? What does it all mean? And how is it all going to end? What is the answer to the riddle of life? As the child looks out upon its earthly dwelling-place it is more than ever sensible of its position as a stranger in a strange land. “Those mountains, ah! they were there,” it muses, “long before I was born. The rushing river, the wild cascade, the bubbling stream, are old features in the landscape. I alone am new. I alone am an intruder.”

It looks up to the sun, flooding the heavens with its light; and as it basks in the beneficent rays a voice within its heart cries out: “That same sun now shining on me has shone for thousands of years before I was so much as thought of. Its bright rays cheered and comforted count-



less generations that have been born and run their course, and passed away, and are now numbered with things forgotten, and so it will continue to shine on thousands yet to come." And as the child strolls down to the pebbly beach, and hears the music of the seething waters, and listens to the waves dashing and breaking on the shore, and grinding the rocks to powder, it again reflects that "those same sounds have tingled in the ears of multitudes, long since dead and turned to clay."

At last he wanders down to some lonely cemetery and lingers amid the memorials of the dead. All around lie the melancholy tombstones. They are old and grey, and gnawed away by the tooth of time, while over many is spread the moss of centuries. The very characters, once so clearly cut upon their polished surfaces, are now blurred and worn, and hardly legible. He deciphers with difficulty the different inscriptions. "Pray for such a one, who died in 1750," or "Of your charity breathe a prayer for such another, who fell asleep in the Lord in 1699," etc. And while he reads, he hears, in fancy, the dead muttering in their shrouds. They seem, in fact, to be preaching to him from out their pulpits of cold stone, and to be breathing in his ear words of awful warning: "Hodie, mihi, cras tibi". "To-day for me, but to-morrow for thee." "What I am now (a little

dust), thou shalt soon be, and what thou art now (living flesh and blood), I once was." "Yes, I, who am now lying here, was once e'en as thou. I too was once rocked in a cradle, fed at the breast, and fondled on the knee. I grew up in strength and beauty, and basked in the sunshine of a mother's love, and gambolled and made merry with my companions on the green. Oh! how gaily we were wont to run and shout, and scream in our thoughtless play. Then life seemed one long holiday. Yes; I had, as thou, my days of pleasure and my days of pain and disappointment, my sunshine and my shadow; though now forgotten and corrupt, I too was once absorbed by thoughts of my business or my profession, my interests, and my anxieties, my enemies and my friends. Aye, I strutted my brief hour upon the stage, in anxious care or thoughtless gaiety. But the years stole by, and full soon the drama of life was ended: the play was over: the curtain fell. My body, like a used-up garment, was flung on one side, and thrown into the grave. Thou, whilst thou standest and gazest, art actually passing along the same route which I have already trodden. Thy days are numbered, and thou wilt soon be by my side."

And, as such thoughts course each other through the brain, the shortness and uncertainty of life are borne in upon the mind with resistless vividness

and force. Oh! how brief, how transient! We are here to-day; to-morrow we are gone. To what are we to compare our present state? To the passage of a ship through the sea. There is a little stirring of the waters, a little fuss and foam and commotion in its immediate neighbourhood, but it passes on; the waters close up, and no trace of its path is to be found. What is life? A vapour which endures for a little while, and then vanishes away. Or it has been compared to a bird winging its way through the air. We gaze upon it for a moment, but see! it is gone. Or like a spark, it glows for an instant in the midst of the night. But before we have time to cry—Behold! it is swallowed up again in darkness.

A hundred years ago, not one of you who now read these lines had any existence. You had not been summoned into the world. In a hundred years more you will most certainly have left it. Life then resembles a hyphen, connecting two eternities. There is the eternity of the past, out of which we have been drawn, and there is the eternity of the future, into which we are so soon to plunge. A moment indeed separates us from it. But on that single moment the whole of our endless future is balancing.

But the child will pursue its inquiries further, and ask: *How* did I get here? That it did not make itself is quite clear. It was not even con-

sulted in the matter. God alone made that child, or could make it. No man could do it. No! its parents were but the instruments—in a sense, the *unconscious* instruments. They knew not, nor can they now explain, how the marvellous structure of even the material body was built up; how muscle and bone, and sinew and ligament were knit together into a single living, breathing whole. It is a work Divine. Who is foolish enough to imagine that unaided man can produce such a marvel? He, who cannot make the least insect that crawls, nor the smallest floweret that blows, how much less can he, of himself, make a human being? Call together your men of science, your learned philosophers; summon your Darwins, Spencers, Cliffords, Lyells, and bid them construct for you, by their own power, the simplest living object: the robber bee, for instance, that pilfers the nectar from the flowers; or the common house fly that buzzes against the window pane. Bid them create a fruit, a flower, a leaf, nay a single blade of common prairie grass. Impossible! As well bid them create sun and moon, and every gleaming star. No. A power superior to man *must* have been his author. An Intellect and a Will mightier than that of man himself were needed to bring him into existence, and that Intellect and Will we call GOD. God made me. He is the author of my being. He and no other placed me in

this world. But consider the consequence. If God made me, then I am His. Since He fashioned me, I belong to Him. He is my supreme Lord and sovereign Ruler. I belong more truly to Him than the picture belongs to the painter who paints it; than the statue to him who hews it from the rock, and shapes it in comeliness and beauty. In fact, nothing belongs to me half so absolutely as I and everything else belong to God. There are many things that we call our own, and of which we dispose as we please; yet we created none of them, and not one of these can be strictly said to owe its existence to us. How infinitely greater and further reaching, then, is God's dominion over man, than man's dominion even over his own handiwork! The question is, Do we realise this? Do we bear in mind the consequences of our subjection to an Almighty Being? Are we conscious, as the days and weeks of toil go by, and as years are added to years, that we are "not our own," but are creatures of an Infinite Creator; that we are bound under the strictest and most binding obligation to obey Him, serve Him, Honour Him, and love Him?

But granted that God made us, and that we are His; and, consequently, that we must serve Him as our supreme Lord and Master; granting all this; reason will not rest there. It demands further, Why did God make us? What was it



that induced Him to call us forth from the bottomless depths of pure nothingness? Now observe, between "nothing" and "something" there yawns an infinite gulf. The two terms are separated, as philosophers speak, by the whole diameter of being. Hence to call my soul from nothingness into existence, God had, if I may so express it, to exercise the whole of His omnipotence. And what was His motive? Was it because I was in any way necessary to Him? Such an idea is in itself absurd. If He did without me during a past eternity, why should I now suddenly become necessary? No! Was it then because of some advantage He was to derive from my existence? An equally impossible suggestion. God is infinite. He possesses within Himself the source of all perfection and felicity, and can stand in need of no one. What is the entire world in His sight? A mere nothing. What are the heavens and the earth, and all men and angels united before His dread presence? No more than a drop of morning dew. How could we therefore add to His essential glory, or increase a happiness already infinite? No; He made us; but it was not through necessity, nor was it through any advantage He could derive from our existence.

Why then was it? It was by reason of His inherent goodness and love. Goodness is always diffusive. Goodness yearns to impart its treasures,

and to let others share in its happiness and possessions. God desired that His own happiness and glory should radiate beyond Himself. As the sun is not only bright itself, but shoots forth its golden beams far and wide, and gladdens ten times ten thousand worlds, so God is not only in Himself infinite Goodness, but He loves to impart and diffuse His gifts and favours among others. Hence He made man, not through necessity, nor through any advantage He could hope to reap from His creation, but through pure, unadulterated love. Indeed this is the only motive consonant with our very knowledge of the nature of God; and it is just precisely the motive He assigns. "Behold I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore I have drawn thee out of nothingness." No other motive can be assigned. But here again we ask, What is the consequence? The consequence is, that we must love Him in return. Love begets love, even between creatures; how much more should the love of the Creator incite and enkindle love in the heart of the creature? If that Divine Power, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, condescends to lavish His love upon me, surely the very least I can do is to love Him in return to the utmost extent of my limited capacity. Nor is this all. He not merely made me, but He has surrounded me with His gifts and

favours. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that is made." He has given us great gifts; and, what is more, to Him we owe the very capacity of enjoying them, without which the gifts themselves would be of little worth. We may divide these gifts into those which are particular and into those which are general. Among our *particular* gifts are life, health, the sense of sight, of hearing, of taste, of smell, and touch; and above all and beyond all others in the natural order, reason and free will.

The five senses put us in relationship with the whole of external nature: and the intellect enables us to think of those external objects, and to reason about them in a rational manner, and to reach out even to the unseen.

By God's *general* gifts we mean those of which all men may make use. Thus the earth, our dwelling-place; the air we breathe; the food by which our animal wants are supplied; the sun which warms and cheers us, as well as delighting us by its beauty. All these things are so many gifts from God, so many tokens of His love, so many proofs of His affection and solicitude for us. We are ready enough to *use* His gifts. There can be no doubt about that. We are never weary of extracting pleasure, amusement, happiness and advantage from every creature capable of yielding it. But how often do we pause, in the midst of

our career, to turn a grateful, loving glance towards Him whose goodness has laid open all these treasures? Did you ever tarry to consider even the magnitude of God's gifts, or the measureless value of even the least of them? Take, as an instance, *the gift of sight*. The eye! What a marvellous organ! If destroyed by an accident, what can supply its place? Who can manufacture another? Though it is a physical thing, a thing formed of flesh and blood and *mere matter*, no man can manufacture such an organ. He has within his reach all the material elements of which it is composed, yet he cannot contrive to so put them together as to form an eye that can be of the smallest service to any one. Science has made great strides; it can do many grand and startling things, but it is powerless to provide a blind man with the organ of vision. It has made many wondrous discoveries, but it has never discovered how to fashion anything to correspond to that. In point of size it is an insignificant organ, yet what endless marvels it discloses for our instruction and delight. It throws open to us the entire heaven with all its myriads of palpitating stars. It reveals to us all the beauties of the world: trees and flowers; the graceful forms and sparkling hues of thousands of gorgeous insects, and the exquisite colouring of countless birds and beasts, and of fish and finny monsters of the deep,

to say nothing of countless gems and precious stones. By aid of the eye we are able to tread our way through the mazes of a great town, or to wander safely over hill and dale; to read books and papers; to contemplate the finest works of the sculptor and the painter; and, what perhaps is most pleasing of all, to gaze into the face of friends and relations, and to read of their affection therein more truly than on their lips; to contemplate a love indeed which is often too deep for words.

All this, and far more, is included in the gift of sight. Yet this is one of the lesser gifts of God. Probably no one truly realises its magnitude till he loses it. The blind (who have not always been blind) alone know how to estimate it at its full value. And what has been said of sight might be said, in a greater or lesser measure, of *all* the other senses—and, indeed, of all that we enjoy in the order of nature. To God we owe our existence; and if our existence, then, of course, all that is included in the term: every organ, every limb, every faculty of mind, and every power of body. How we should, therefore, thank God for His goodness and generosity! Yet how many of us make use of His gifts merely to offend the Giver.

But, further, God not only made us and all that exists around us, but He preserves and maintains



us each succeeding moment. Nothing is, or can be, self-supporting. To say that any creature is self-sufficient is to say that it is independent of God, and needs not God, which is absurd. Let me illustrate my contention by an example. I lift a great stone from the ground. I raise it till it is on a level with my head. Will it remain there? Yes; but only so long as I support it. If I remove my hands the stone cannot continue suspended in mid-air, but falls abruptly to the ground. So when God lifts us out of nothing, it is not enough. He must needs maintain and preserve us, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. St. Augustine reminds us that we "are as much indebted to God for each succeeding moment of our existence as we are for the very first". That being the case, how our hearts ought to be continually welling over with gratitude and thankfulness.

Many other considerations might be made to awaken similar sentiments; but let us pass them by to ask: *Whither* am I going? We are ever hastening on towards eternity. You have contemplated the mountain torrent skipping and gurgling merrily over the stones? How quick, how sprightly, how glittering! *That is Youth*. You have watched the same broadening out into a full flowing stream? *That is Manhood* and mature age. You have looked upon it also as it

expanded into a wide majestic river, till its waters, with slackened pace, glided on almost imperceptibly, to be at last lost in the deep ocean? *That is old age*, ending in eternity. We are all like to a river, hurrying on to throw ourselves into that boundless, bottomless main. Death is the dark entry through which we must pass. Those gloomy portals loom in the uncertain distance. Every moment brings us a step nearer. Ever hour diminishes the interval separating us from them. Often we may wish to pause in our onward course. Impossible! Often we would gladly linger on in the groves of pleasure and dissipation, or even call back again the days long dead, or arrest the fleeting hour. But no. It cannot be! A power stronger than ourselves urges us on. As well seek to stay the earth revolving on its axis, or to check the meteor's flight, as to lay a staying hand on the rushing river of Time.

But *whither* are we hurrying so fast? Into eternity. Aye, but what kind of eternity? There are two: one of joy ineffable, another of sorrow inexpressible. The one is a home of peace, pleasure, delight, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest". The other is a bottomless abyss, where eternal disorder and confusion, and endless darkness reign. Darkness in the intellect; darkness in the will; darkness in the heart; as well as darkness before the eyes.

Into one or these two places we shall each soon find ourselves. Which, we should ask ourselves, is to be *my* eternity? It depends upon myself. "Before you lie life and death; that which you choose, you shall have." No one need trouble to inform us which he is choosing. We can tell by observing his life, his conduct, his general behaviour and character. If he is doing what he believes to be right; if he is acting up to his conscience; if he wishes earnestly and practically to carry out God's will, even when it costs him some sacrifice, we know that man is choosing the bright and glorious eternity; if not, we are equally sure that he is choosing the eternity of misery, remorse, pain and endless agony. What a privilege to help the thoughtless and the giddy to make a proper choice, and to reach at last the haven of everlasting rest!

"Concede mihi, O unicum bonum meum et omne bonum, te unum quaerere, te unum invenire, te unum amare, te uno frui, te unum tota anima possidere, et in hac vita et in altera. Amen."

## CHAPTER II.

### DUST TO DUST; AND ASHES TO ASHES.

“Der Mensch hat hier dritthalb Minuten; eine zu lächeln—eine zu seufzen—und eine halbe zu lieben; denn, mitten in dieser Minute, stirbt er.”—RICHTER.

THE greatness, the dignity and the power of man have in all ages formed the favourite themes of the poet and the rhetorician. “What a piece of work is a man!” exclaims the immortal bard of Avon. “How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!” (*Hamlet*, ii.). Marvel at his ingenuity and dexterity, cries out the scientist. Who so skilled in all the arts and sciences? See how he guides the electric spark, and sends it to the uttermost bounds of the earth with declarations of peace or with threats of war. Watch how the most unruly forces of nature yield him service and call him master. As obedient slaves they bear him and his, mile after mile, along the iron way, across distant continents, through mountain ranges, over foaming torrents and fordless rivers. Yea, they will transport him with safety even athwart the

trackless sea, and bear him up amidst the most violent storms and tempests that ever wind did blow. Or turn to another witness of his genius. Consider his skill as exemplified in the gigantic structures that cover the land from shore to shore. Contemplate the palaces, the cathedrals, the public buildings and costly monuments of our great cities, that man's cunning has devised, and man's hands have so carefully and so wondrously woven together out of the hard stone or the solid marble! What is there that can resist his power or withstand his industry and intelligence!

Such is the language of the world: and, when not in actual language, such is at least its thought and opinion. In this age especially, when new powers are being unfolded and fresh discoveries are continually coming to light; when, too, every department of science, of industry and of art, is becoming more and more cultivated and studied; when education is daily more and more extending its borders, and embracing a wider and wider circle, we are apt to lose ourselves in the thought of our supposed greatness, and to forget our inborn weakness and misery—to be, in a word, so preoccupied with the fairy-like colours that play about this fragile bubble of life, as to forget how soon it is to burst, and all its glory to vanish away—

Come la bolla, che da morta gora  
Pullula un tratto, e si resolve in nulla.



Hence it is with special reason that the Church, that great witness of truth, loves to remind us of our real littleness and insufficiency. So that, while our ears are yet tingling with the sounds of praise and flattery concerning man's dignity and greatness, her solemn words of warning come stealing in upon us like the dread and menacing tones of an alarm bell: "Remember, man, that thou art dust".

Dust! From the dust we come. Back to the dust we go. "The body shall return to the earth from which it was taken, and the spirit to Him who made it." This is the grand truth we have to learn, the solemn fact to be kept constantly before us. Old and young, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, boast as you may of your fancied glories, your titles and your fame, back you must sink into the womb of earth from which you emerged, and mingle again with the dust.

What stupendous lessons we are taught as we wander forth into the lonely cemetery, with the buried thousands slumbering beneath! Hush. Not a sound. Oh! how still, how silent lie the thousands, whose voices once formed the city's ceaseless roar, and whose hastening footsteps once made each street resound with the low, dull murmur of never-ending toil! A century—perhaps two or three centuries ago—and that very dust was animated by ten thousand principles of

life. It moved amid animated scenes and along busy paths. It sauntered through the market-place, and strolled in the public squares. It stood behind the counter or at the desk ; it declaimed in the courts of justice ; it harangued in the senate, it exhorted from the pulpit. It bought, it sold ; it struggled and fought ; it ate and drank ; it played and laughed and made merry. It travelled from place to place, and was dressed up and adorned ; it was loved and cared for, and made much of. And now ? Now it lies at the mercy of every wintry blast.

Take up a handful of this dust. It is light and dry. See how the rude wind carries it off : see how it scatters it—now north, now south, now east, now west. Yet that handful of dust was once perchance a human heart that throbbed and panted with passion as yours, dear reader, may be throbbing now—a heart where love or hate, envy or ambition, once made a home ! This crumbling, powdery earth that now we tread so contemptuously beneath our feet was once, perhaps, a pair of childish eyes, beaming with light and intelligence. Eyes that looked up with fondness into a mother's sympathetic face, and spoke a language sweeter than all others to that mother's heart. But now mother and son, parent and child, are resolved again into their primordial form.

They lived their span of life. They spent their

short day. They strutted their brief hour upon the stage. Then, when the fever of life was over, they were laid to rest in the grave, and nature's alchemy speedily wrought the change: the industrious worms have dissected each limb and each bone: the rain has filtered again and again through the unsightly mass. Summer's heats and winter's frosts have been busy at work year after year, and now all that remains of what was once so surpassing fair are a few ounces of dust.

Is not this a solemn, and at the same time a salutary reflection: teaching us the condition of human existence, and revealing to man his inherent nothingness, and vanity, and laying bare, as with the scalpel, the interior foulness of what is so beauteous without?

The reflection we make concerning others will in turn be made concerning ourselves. In a short space of time we, too, must pass on to the cemetery. Your youthful limbs that bear you now, dear readers, from place to place with such grace and ease; your countenances now lit up with pleasure, now cast down with sorrow; your arms and hands and lithesome fingers, applied to so many wondrous ends and purposes, will soon have nothing left to represent them but a little dust: nothing better will remain to show what once had been, but a shovelful of clay. "Dust to dust; ashes to ashes."

The soul of man has not its resting-place here. But God would place it here for its trial and probation. As a mere spirit it would be neither seen nor heard, so God drew the dust of earth around it, and sent it, clothed in this earthly vesture, to live and move for a while among men. What, indeed, are we; what is any man but an apparition? For what else is an apparition but a spirit, which takes to itself a visible form, and appears? Such is man. Is not the soul, that thinking, reasoning knowing, and loving principle, a spirit invisible and spiritual? And is it not by taking a body, a visible and material form, that the spirit appears, is known, recognised, communicated with, and consciously approached? When the soul's term of probation terminates it casts aside the trammels of flesh and blood and exists as a pure, unimpeded spirit. It throws off this vesture, never more to resume it *in its original corruptible state*. It will, in very truth, be one day clothed again in its body; but that body will be spiritualised, glorified, and in its qualities and attributes wholly changed, for "corruption will put on incorruption".

But in the meantime we are all hastening to decay. Every country, state and city throws off its inhabitants as a tree or shrub casts its leaves when autumn winds blow strong and cold. Generation after generation departs to make room for

others. Like the waves of the sea, one follows after another, each in turn breaking and disappearing as it strikes against the eternal shore. The approach of one is but the signal for the departure of another. As we gaze around and see the new generation entering the world, we realise that *our* generation has nearly had its day. Every infant that is born, every child we meet upon the way, seems to cry out in unmistakable language: "Make room," "give place," "you have had your turn". "Your day is waning; your evening is drawing to a close; your night is coming on; prepare to depart, and make room for us."

But besides these external voices we may hear similar warnings from within. Our own frail being is ever reminding us of our approaching dissolution. Every pain, every ache, every sense of weariness, of lassitude, of depression and distress, clearly indicates disorder and decay in some part or another of our complicated system. Why do we take so much nourishment? Why eat and drink every day, and many times a day? To repair the loss of tissue, and the wear and tear of life. So, again: why rest and sleep? Why the darkened room, the soft couch, and the hush of sounds when the day is done? Why, but to afford us the opportunity to recover our wasted strength, and to revive our flagging energies, that we may linger on a little longer. What does each beat



of our hearts, each pulsation of our blood (every one of which is accompanied by some waste and wearing away of the organism) do, but take up and re-echo in its own mute but expressive language the warning of holy Church: "Remember, man, thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return". Thus all things, both without and within, instruct us that we have not here a lasting city.

But if all things serve to remind us of this momentous truth, why, it may be asked, should the Church recall it so frequently to our minds? Why should she deem it necessary every Ash-Wednesday to strew the ashes on our bowed heads, and to bid us remember our last end? The reason is that we are required not merely to know, but to realise the fleeting nature of this life; not to believe only, but to be impressed and influenced by this belief. How few there are who are so impressed! How small the number who even, when given the premises, can draw the conclusion! Would, indeed, the robust and healthy so glory in their strength, and reckon with so much confidence on a long and prosperous life, were they to realise that "all flesh is grass"? Would the young and the comely take so much vain complacency in their beauty and good looks were they really sensible of the fact that, "like the flowers of the field, so shall they perish," and wither and fade "as the prairie grass

that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven"? If all believe these truths, why is their effect so slight? Why do they neither humble the proud, nor make virtuous the vicious? Let the rich and the prosperous, and those who spend themselves in the ceaseless struggle to amass yet more, pause to reflect on the approaching hour when, as the Holy Spirit says, "under them shall the moth be strewn and worms shall be their covering," when their best friends shall leave them, and shrink back horrified from their corrupting and hideous corpses.

Death teaches the haughty and imperious as he passes by his poor and lowly brothers in the street, that he and they were moulded out of the same clay; and that the self-same end awaits them all. It points out the folly, no less than the wickedness of those who dare to raise their puny hands against the supreme Arbitrator of their fate. But it appeals with overwhelming force to the sensualist, and mocks the insanity of those who are willing to sacrifice God and an eternity of bliss for the degrading and bestial pleasures of the flesh.

The day at last dawns whose evening we shall never see. The hour strikes whose close we shall never know. That solemn and awful moment approaches upon which the whole of our eternity is balancing; that point of time in which our

whole being undergoes its last permanent change. The transition from time to eternity; from fickleness to fixity; from a material to a spiritual state, is upon us. That transition which millions have already passed through, which has been experienced by so many even whom we have intimately known and tenderly loved, is now to be experienced by us.

Yes, for now it is *my* turn. Yesterday it was for such a one; to-morrow it will be for such another, but to-day it is for me. What will our thoughts be then? What shall we feel when we find ourselves hurried on towards the very brink of eternity: borne on as a drowning man is borne along by the rapids: unable to turn back, to tarry for awhile, or to arrest even for one brief moment our approaching end?

Already we seem to hear the voice of the omniscient Judge, and to catch faint glimmers from that "great, white throne". The fear of death comes upon us, and cold beads of perspiration start from every pore, and stand out like the hoar-frost upon our brow. How we shall then reproach our cowardice in not having been more exacting and severe with ourselves. It is not so much the knowledge that we have sinned that will cause us such excruciating anguish, but rather that knowing we were sinners, we did so little to wash out and atone for sin—that we made so little

use of such abundant and such varied opportunities.

And with such regrets and vain lamentations—"vain," because made *then* and not *now*, the time wears on, and the fatal moment arrives; and those who have watched and tended us, it may be for many days and nights, will look each other sorrowfully in the face and softly whisper, "Ah! it is all over"—"see—he has ceased to breathe," the "throbbing heart is still". . . . Then close the eyes: fold the hands: stretch out the limbs. This is no place for the cold clay. Bear him away. Lay earth to earth, and dust to dust. Hide the corpse beneath the ground. . . . Was he learned, rich, noble? Had he many friends, wide possessions, a great name? Had he made a reputation for himself? Was he a leader of men, a renowned politician, a noted warrior, a writer, a speaker, a poet? . . . Pause not to inquire. It brooks nothing. 'Tis an idle question. Hide him 'neath the earth. Place the stone above him, and on it write the one word: "Vanity". But one thing really signifies: was he in the grace of God?

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Await alike th' inevitable hour,  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

## CHAPTER III.

### MAN A MICROCOSM.

“Omnis creaturæ aliquid habet homo : habet namque homo commune esse cum lapidibus, vivere cum arboribus, sentire cum animalibus, intelligere cum angelis.”—S. GREG. MAG., *Homil.* 29, *super Evang.*

“Las acciones emanadas de nuestra sustancia pertenecen á cuatro clases, como lo puede observar cada uno en si mismo. Unas nos son comunes con todos los cuerpos de la naturaleza en general, otras con las plantas solamente, otras con los brutos, otras, en fin, nos son propias, exclusivas, en términos que per ellas nos distinguimos de todos los séres con quienes nos hallamos en relacion.”—*La Relig. Catholica*, por JOSÉ MENDIVE, p. 353.

OF all visible creatures existing on the face of the earth there is not one-half so deserving of our study and contemplation as man. Man has been called a microcosm (*μικρός-κόσμος*), or little world, because he contains within himself the elements and properties of all that exists around him. He has existence in common with the rocks and the soil; he possesses the power of growth and development in common with plants and trees; he enjoys the capacity of sensation and motion, and the faculties of sight, taste, smell, etc., in common with the birds of the air and the beasts of the forests and the fields; and, lastly, he has the glorious gift of reason and intelligence in common with the highest angels and archangels of heaven. He thus unites and, as it were, con-



concentrates within his own insignificant bulk qualities the most unlike and capacities the most diverse, which are distributed in an ever-varying measure over the rest of creation. *In this respect*, indeed, man surpasses the highest of the angels,<sup>1</sup> and even in heaven might well excite their envy, were envy possible in the regions of perfect bliss. Man has been defined a rational animal—"animal intellectu præditum". He belongs to the genus animal: the specific difference, however, between him and all other animals is that he is rational, *i.e.*, endowed with intelligence.

A little reflection will at once convince us of the justice of the definition. Man is truly an animal. As truly an animal as a dog or a horse, a peacock or an owl, or any other furred quadruped or feathered biped. He is endowed with limbs and organs, nerves and muscles, stomach and brains, just as they are. Like other animals, man breathes the air, and lives by food, and needs rest and sleep at certain intervals; and, like them, he would speedily expire if these were denied. The greatest king

<sup>1</sup> The saintly L. Lessius calls attention to this gratifying fact, when contrasting the relative positions of men and angels in heaven. *En verba*: "Homo aliquid habebit amplius, et quodammodo erit beatior spiritibus. Par enim illis erit impassibilitate, celeritate, vi penetrandi, potentia movendi, visione, amore, et fruitione beata, et cognitione rerum omnium, tam spiritualium, quam corporalium. Et præter hæc habebit gloriam corporis, et multiplices in corpore et per corporis sensus voluptates, quibus Angeli carent. Unde homo erit beatior extensive; quia ejus beatitudo non continebit se in anima, sed effundet se in corpus," etc.

on earth has just as much need of a heart and lungs, a spinal cord, and an alimentary canal, and of muscular and nervous tissues and the rest, as the costermonger's donkey that kicks up his heels or browses the thistles on the king's highway. The sun scorches, the rain wets and the frost bites one as the other. If you beat them they will suffer; if you prick them they will bleed; and if you poison them they will die. Man, like the beast, is subject to disease, decrepitude and to old age. One no less than the other, after the lapse of a few years, sickens, disintegrates, falls into pieces, and sinks into a common grave, to be heard of no more in this world.

So far as man's merely physical condition is concerned there is very little to choose between him and the beasts. In fact, other animals not merely equal, but surpass him in almost all his corporal gifts; so that, considered simply as an animal, man is a very poor and inferior one. The ox surpasses him in strength of limb; the squirrel in agility; the deer in swiftness and sureness of foot. The eagle possesses keener and clearer vision; the fox and the hound a truer scent; the crocodile stronger jaws; and the boa constrictor a greater power of digestion. Man can neither dive like the otter, swim like the fish, nor cleave the summer air with pinions spread like the swallow or the swift; he can neither scale the craggy

mountains of eternal snow, like the grizzly bear ; nor leap from peak to peak, like the goat or nimble-footed roe.

His cry is not so loud as that of the angry lion, nor his minstrelsy so sweet as that of the lark or nightingale.

In strength, in endurance, in subtlety, in grace of movement, in length of days, in power of resistance, and in almost every physical quality, man is bound to confess himself immeasurably inferior to the beasts. So far as his body is concerned, he is not only an animal but a very contemptible and sorry animal indeed.

God, however, has bestowed upon him one great and priceless gift in the order of nature, which compensates, and even more than compensates, for all these disadvantages—a gift which at once renders him superior to all other animals, however powerful and strong ; and that is the marvellous gift of Reason.<sup>1</sup>

It is reason that at once, and, as it were, with a single wave of a magician's wand, transforms this feeble and helpless creature into the mighty and all but resistless sovereign, whom we contemplate with so much wonder and admiration. It is reason alone that constitutes man the undisputed ruler of the earth ; that places the imperial crown upon his

<sup>1</sup> Consult an interesting little pamphlet by M. Strom entitled *Ist der Mensch ein Thier ?* (pub. Aachen).

head, and the sceptre of authority in his hand, and proclaims him king of the visible world.<sup>1</sup>

By aid of this priceless gift he makes the very elements his slaves and obsequious servants. He can harness the winds to his ships of war, like mettlesome steeds, and so traverse the broadest and the stormiest sea undaunted. He can make the lightning his trusty messenger; and compel fire and water to labour for him, and to set ten thousand wheels in rapid motion in factories and mills scattered over all the land; here grinding and crushing the hardest gold-bearing quartz; and there spinning and weaving the softest cotton into the most delicate and gossamer fabrics. He pierces the mountains, skims the seas, and ascends into the clouds. Nay, more; he can hold converse with the most distant extremities of the world, and while seated comfortably at his breakfast table, read, over his tea and toast, detailed accounts of what is taking place in the furthestmost parts of the earth—the inundations in Spain, the strikes in Germany, the earthquakes in Japan, the riots in China, or the famine in Russia.

All creation he forces into his service, and treats as an irresponsible autocrat. He robs the sheep

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, another side to the picture, suggested by these lines of Schiller (which scarcely bear translating), *viz.*:—

“Der Mensch entsteht aus Morast, und wäset eine Weile im Morast, und macht Morast, und gährt wieder zusammen in Morast,” etc.

of its fleece; the seal of its fur; the bear of its winter coat; the elephant of its ivory; the whale of its precious oils; the swan of its down; and the bee of its honey. The spirited horse must carry him; the hound must hunt for him; and the patient lowing herds must supply his dairy with milk and cream, and stock his larder with wholesome and nutritious foods. Thus God's good gift of reason enables this puny defenceless creature, man, to lay all creation under contribution; and to force, so to speak, both great and small down on their knees before him, ready to follow his will and to carry out his bidding.

Such, in the barest outline, is the inestimable value of the gift of reason.<sup>1</sup> We call attention to it, in order that, realising to some extent its priceless worth, we may render the heartier thanks to God, and strive the more earnestly to employ it ever in the service of the Giver. Indeed, if properly used, there is no more powerful auxiliary in our struggle after sanctity. It is true that some very silly people try to persuade themselves that

<sup>1</sup> Though marvellously precious is the gift of reason, it is nevertheless surpassed by that of free-will, which is even a more resplendent reflection of God in the human soul. The magnitude of this endowment is well expressed by Dr. W. G. Ward: "Each of us possesses true liberty; in other words, each one possesses *what might have seemed the inalienable prerogative of God*, in being (as it is expressed) a self-originating principle of causation. Each one of us then is entrusted with the charge of that most precious deposit—his own moral character, his own permanent and eternal interest." (*Nature and Grace*, p. 317.)



the Church fears or despises knowledge and intelligence in her children. She does nothing of the kind. On the contrary, she knows full well, and is the first to acknowledge, that reason, when not distorted by prejudice nor blinded by passion, leads to God, and that some of the greatest saints that ever lived have been at the same time the greatest philosophers and the profoundest theologians; and no less conspicuous for learning than for sanctity.

It is certain, of course, that true and solid sanctity has its root in the will, and not in the intellect. Any one who can, at all times and under all circumstances, exclaim *sincerely and from his heart*—“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” is in very truth a saint. For sanctity is nothing more than the complete and perfect conformity between the created will of man and the uncreated and eternal will of God. Hence, on Christmas night, the angelic hosts, after singing “Glory to God in the highest,” went on to proclaim “peace to men on earth”—not to men of great influence and position; not to men of great wealth and intellect, but peace to men of GOOD WILL” (Luke ii. 14). “Who possesses a good will,” says St. Augustine, “possesses all things.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Non nisi *voluntate* peccatur,” says St. Augustine; and again: “totum habet, qui bonam voluntatem habet”.

St. Bernard remarks: “Bona *voluntas* in animo, est origo omnium

Still, while admitting all this, we must not lose sight of the fact that the will is not an absolutely independent power. It does not, nay, it cannot, unaided, originate a single effort. It can no more stir without a motive than the sails of a windmill can revolve in a dead calm. We teach, as all Catholic theologians and philosophers, that the will of man is free. Truly. But free to do what? Free to act without an impulse? No; without an impulse it can never put forward the slightest effort of any kind. Its freedom consists in the *liberty of choice*. It may choose between two or more motives. It may follow this one rather than that; it may prefer the less worthy rather than the more worthy, or set aside a thousand for the sake of one; but to dispense with motive altogether is impossible. Then what faculty, we may ask with some degree of interest, supplies the motives, or motive power, to stir up the lethargic will? What is the faculty which spurs and whips on the will to vigorous action? The intellect; or, in other words, reason.

Reason places before the mind certain motives, and it is only when stimulated by these motives that the will is enabled to exert itself at all. Irrational animals and insects need no such special appeal, of course, because they act, not by reason,

bonorum, et omnium mater virtutum; e converso, mala *voluntas* est origo omnium malorum, et vitiorum" (*De Vita Solit.*).

but by instinct. An example or two will make this clear.

A bee, without any consciousness of the beneficial results of its industry, will collect honey with infinite pains, and construct the most perfect hexagonal scales for its reception; so, too, a bird will build the most exquisite nest; and a spider spin a faultless web. But they labour without any freely directed or conscious intention. Instinct is their sole guide. Hence they require no instruction, and no experience, but execute their various tasks as perfectly the first time they perform them as the last. Man is quite differently circumstanced. He is a helpless creature till reason dawns. In infancy he is so dependent upon others that he would inevitably perish if left to himself. He will not and cannot exert himself or make the slightest effort till reason, at last, like a kind monitor, takes him in hand.

Again, whether bees are fed artificially or not, they will continue to gather honey and construct their cells with equal industry, because instinct is indiscriminating. Not so, man. If he hungers he will labour; yes—to *obtain bread*: but if he have all his wants supplied he will not impose upon himself any needless and unpleasant task.

We must all have noticed that men are found who will labour and toil, and suffer and endure, and brace themselves up to the most herculean

tasks; but *never without a motive*. As the possession of free will enables them to choose between motives, so the possession of intelligence deters them from acting in the absence of motive.

Gaze over the far-stretching earth. Behold how men toil; and wonder as you behold! Go where we will, the same strange scene meets our eye, and repeats itself again and again in every clime. In the continent of Europe; in distant Australia; beneath the burning, blistering sun of the Tropics; amid the eternal snows and piercing winds of the frozen North; in fact, wherever human foot has trod, and wherever men have penetrated, there is sowing and reaping, buying and selling, bartering and bargaining, and toiling and miling, and sweating. The buzz of machinery, the whirl of wheels, and the rush of steam everywhere fill the air. Yet, among all these millions of active, energetic; slaving men, there is not one who is not acting under the influence of some motive. Not one arm is raised; not one muscle contracts; not one head throbs; not "one brow is wet with honest sweat," but in response to some mental picture of gains to be won, or pains to be warded off, or love to be indulged.

Ask old farmer Giles why he tills his fields, and breaks up the stubborn clods, and scatters the grain in the newly-turned furrows, while heaven and earth are in contention, and bluff Boreas is

stalking over the land, plucking at his gray locks, and taking liberties with his loose jerkin and flaunting smock-frock. Is it because he finds pleasure in the work itself? No, for he will tell you that the labour is hard; that the winds have no pity on his weather-beaten form; and that the chill rains and the angry storms beat upon him and flout him without mercy all the day long. But he endures it all for sake of the harvest. It is the hope of reward that makes what is in itself repugnant and distasteful sweet and pleasant. Or enter into any of the great shops in London, Dublin, Paris or Berlin. There we may watch both men and women, week in, week out, from morning till night, standing behind the counters, and waiting in readiness to serve all who chance to enter—displaying their goods, and tempting the unwary to buy. Consider their behaviour. If they grow weary and sick of heart they must not let it be noticed; if inwardly annoyed and irritated by the unreasonableness or the exactions of purchasers they must restrain themselves and hide their anger under a bland smile and a suave manner, for else their trade would suffer. Observe, further, that they are at their post early in the morning, and remain there all day. They must sacrifice their time; they must give up their liberty; they must control their tempers and exercise an infinite patience. Their position and



occupation require it. And all this they actually do, and do willingly, and why? For the sake of the kingdom of God? For the sake of an unfading crown? No! For such motives few would do as much. It is for the sake of twenty-five or thirty shillings a-week! And they who work not for gain, work through fear of pain.

Many a poor wretch would gladly lie down and rest, but poverty and all its attendant evils force him to take up his spade or shovel, and set to work again. Hunger is a hard master. It goads on the most reluctant, and forces even those who are unfit for work to labour still. And to these two great motive powers we must add a third, *i.e.*, the incentive of affection, the strongest of all.<sup>1</sup> "*Omnia vincit amor,*" and "*Amator amicæ mancipium,*" are proverbs recognised as true by all the world.

When tender love unites two hearts, and binds men together, who can measure its influence? On occasions when a man would stir neither hand nor foot for his own advantage, how often will he rouse himself into action for very love of the wife of his bosom, whose sorrowful up-turned eyes and beseeching looks he is powerless to resist! How many a mother, too, otherwise careless and deaf to all persuasion, will, at the

<sup>1</sup> "Nihil est tam durum atque ferreum quod non amoris igne vincatur" (ST. AUG.).

prayer of her children, apply herself to the most arduous tasks. Her strong affection for them becomes a principle of untold strength. She will court every danger, risk death itself, and attempt even the impossible, in order to succour and safeguard those whom she so loves! She will count her sufferings even a joy, if only they enable her to bring the necessary food and warmth to her starving young.<sup>1</sup>

Thus every reasonable creature who wilfully suffers and toils does so for one of three great motives: 1. for desire of gain; 2. through dread of pain; 3. for sake of love.

The soldier who fights, fights for gain of some kind. It may not be for silver or gold. He may be no mercenary. It may be for glory, or for fame; or, like Napoleon I. and renowned Alexander, for empire and a throne; but some motive must urge him on. So it is with the artist and the poet, the judge and the barrister, the politician, the physician, the musician, and all others, down to the common bagman and rag

<sup>1</sup> The strength of maternal love in the human animal is wonderfully nearly approached by the parental instinct in irrational beings. Thus, "swallows will fly into burning houses to save their young. When a young whale is harpooned, the mother will not desert it while it lives. If polar bears are compelled, when chased, to leave their young, they presently return to look for them, and shed (according to Brehm) great tears, and swim round the coast for several days in their distress. Many animals try to draw the attention of the pursuer from their young to themselves" (see H. Höffding's *Psychology*).

and bone merchant. Each applies himself in his respective sphere of life, but always in obedience to some impulse, always by reason of some motive presented before the mind by the intellect. It may be wealth, or it may be fame; it may be ambition, or it may be greed; it may be pleasure, which the mere exercise of power yields; or it may be, to be spoken of and lauded by posterity. It may be any one of these, or any combination of them, or all of them together; but a motive there must be, or all hard labour must cease. And, however varied, and even contradictory these motives may appear, they may all be reduced to one of the three classes enumerated above.

Without such motives all human energy would be paralysed, and the great pulse of human life would stop. This much must appear perfectly obvious to any one who seriously considers the ways and doings of men. The important and practical point, however, is to apply this truth to the spiritual and supernatural life.

Man's primary duty in this world is to sanctify his soul, and to fit himself for an eternal throne of glory in heaven. This is no child's play! It means downright hard work, constant application, and concentrated attention. It involves many a severe struggle, many a hard-contested battle. The *unum necessarium* of the Scriptures is not to

be attained without much self-sacrifice, serious efforts and repeated victories over self. Yet in spiritual things as in temporal things, men will not labour nor deny themselves without a motive. A life of virtue is as impossible without an adequate inducement as is a life of hard physical labour.

Sanctity supposes a certain definite line of conduct. Conduct is made up of a series of particular acts; each particular act<sup>1</sup> in the series demands a special motive. Ergo, etc.

Now, do supernatural motives exist? Are incitements to virtue arising from fear, desire and love, to be found in the order of grace as of nature? Are there stimuli to help us, and to urge us on in the spiritual conflict, as in the physical? Evidently: and, what is more, they are immeasurably more cogent, forcible and weighty than any which we have to influence us in the affairs of this world.

What racking pain, what loathsome disease, what fell disgrace or burning shame, can compare with the unending tortures and superhuman agonies of hell? What reward that the world has to offer us, whether it come in the form of wealth or station, or fame or influence, or health or beauty, can

<sup>1</sup> We refer here, of course, not to the *actus hominis*, but to the *actus humanus*: not to what the Germans call "Die Thätigkeit des Menschen," but to "Die Menschliche Thätigkeit"; i.e., "Actus qui voluntate deliberata procedunt, ut dicunt theologi"; and which alone are meritorious.

approach in grandeur or magnificence the imperishable rewards of heaven? What motive founded on the love of father or mother, brother or sister, wife or children, husband or lover, can come even within a measurable distance of the ineffable love or the Infinite Goodness, the uncreated Beauty, and the Divine and everlasting Truth?

Furnished with motives such as faith provides, we may surely expect almost any degree of sanctity of even the most pusillanimous. Who, indeed, with such incitements before him, will find it impossible, or even difficult, to follow the path of perfection, however strait, and steep, and thorn-strewn? If men so labour for the bread that perishes, surely we have a right to conclude that they will be far more ready to labour for that which endureth for ever! If a mere earthly love will set a man's heart on fire, fill it with the courage as well as the strength of a lion, and incite him to deeds of heroism and daring surpassing all belief, what an immeasurably greater effect should the immeasurably higher love of God produce! Calm, plain reason itself will unhesitatingly declare that the eternal must outweigh the temporal, and the things of heaven all possible things of earth.

Undoubtedly. Yet we shall be reminded that the facts are against us. The reader will simply point to the men and women who make up the bulk



of the fifteen hundred millions of people now inhabiting the world.<sup>1</sup> He will say: "See! They are full of worldly ambition and earthly aims; they do far more for the sake of temporal than for the sake of eternal gains. Will not many a poor devil (does he deserve a better name?) toil all day to escape poverty, who will neither confess his sins nor humble his pride, to escape even hell itself? Is not the promise of a handful of gold or silver often a more powerful stimulus than the promise of the empyrean heaven and all that it contains? That hundreds of thousands stand in greater awe of the police and of imprisonment than of all the furies of hell combined; and that they will do, and are doing, vastly more for earthly lovers than they will even so much as attempt for the love of God, are propositions almost as indisputable as that two and two make four."

We do not deny one word of this indictment which we put into the mouth of the supposed reader. Evidences of its substantial truth are daily before our eyes. Yet our contention remains untouched. The motives for loving God and for leading a life of virtue are, *in themselves*, infinitely stronger than all the motives the world has to offer, even though you were to multiply

<sup>1</sup> The total population of the world, according to *The Times*, is about 1,455,933,000 (*vide* 25th October, 1887).

their number and their intensity throughout all eternity.

Then why in the name of common sense are men not more affected by them? Why, in a word, does that which is immeasurably small outweigh that which is immeasurably great? Why does a withered leaf, or a particle of dust, produce a more palpable effect than all the inestimable treasures in the treasury of God? Why do considerations of time influence more than those of eternity? Why do the promises of man excite and stimulate people more than the promises of God?

The answer is plain. It is not enough that a motive exists, nor even that it is strong with the strength of God. It must, furthermore, be known; it must be duly considered, and in some degree, at all events, appreciated. The great principle underlying the whole difficulty is this, *viz., a motive, however powerful and however irresistible in itself, is simply no motive at all to the mind that fails to master it and grasp its real significance.*

As Goethe so justly observes:—

Was man nicht versteht, besitzt man nicht.

What doctrine is better calculated in itself to scare men from sin than the doctrine of eternal punishment? Yet who will reckon the millions

who (while professing to believe in it) yet sin, and sin, and sin, without the slightest fear? Yes, men who tremble at the thought of earthly pains, men who are intensely apprehensive of the evils of imprisonment and transportation; and who grow deadly pale at the threat of the gallows or the guillotine, or even of the lash, are not afraid of the fires that are never quenched, and dare to make light of the anger of an irresistible God! But why? Well because to them they are not realities. To such as these, indeed, hell is nothing more than a painted fire, and its fiercest terrors but the foolish fancies of a diseased imagination. They cannot see the glow of the furnace; they cannot hear the shrieks of the lost; they cannot feel the gnawing of the worm that never dies; therefore hell is a figment, nothing more.

They may confess the doctrine of eternal punishment, but they do so without understanding what it is they confess. They neither dwell upon it, nor familiarise themselves with it. Such thoughts, in fact, are found to be too troublesome and disturbing, so best allowed to sleep. Hence, from want of reflecting upon them, men cease to be influenced; and weaker and weaker these great motives become, till worldly minded people end at last by being affected by nothing but what they can either see, or hear, or feel, or actually experience for themselves. The invisible world, though

far more real and firmly established than any object we now gaze upon, speedily becomes in their eyes just exactly as though it had no existence whatever; and thus the truth of the old adage, "Out of sight, out of mind," receives its confirmation and exemplification.

Here we put our finger, as it were, on the very seat of the disease which is destroying the spiritual life of the world, and sowing the seeds of eternal misery. "The just man lives by faith;" the unjust by sense. The man of God has the eyes of his soul open to contemplate heavenly things; the man of the world sees only with the eyes of his body, and is, essentially, of the earth, earthy.

The saints, even the greatest of them, were formed from the same clay as ourselves; their minds and intellects were created on the same plan as our own. Hence it is abundantly clear that the motives that influenced them so strongly would influence us equally *if we saw them as they did*. The self-same motives that induced the great heroes of the Church to fling to the winds riches and honours and earthly delights, and to esteem them all as dung, for the sake of Christ, exist at the present moment in all their pristine force and cogency, undiminished by time, unaffected by age. They will influence us as they influenced others; but always on one condition—on condition that we perceive them, realise them, drink in their mean-

ing and thoroughly imbue ourselves with a sense of their intense reality and objective truth.

Like Bartimeus of old, the world sits by the wayside, blind and unconscious, while Jesus Christ is passing close by. Would that, like that poor son of Timeus, it were aware of its blindness, and would cry out, as he did, refusing to hold his peace: "Rabboni, grant that I may see" (Mark x. 51). "Lord, that my eyes be opened" (Matt. xx. 33). Then Christ would work the same miracle again that He worked by the walls of Jericho well-nigh two thousand years ago, and the world would receive its sight, and at last realize its position, and amend.



## CHAPTER IV.

### ON PAIN, CONSIDERED AS A MOTIVE.

“Thy pains, once gone over into yesterday, become joys to thee. Besides thou knowest not what heavenly blessedness and indispensable sanative virtue was in them; thou shalt only know it after many days, when thou art wiser!”—T. CARLYLE, *Past and Present*, p. 133.

AS we have already remarked, man is generally defined “a rational animal”. Now, being in part animal and in part rational, he sometimes acts as an irrational creature; that is to say, by habit, instinct, passion, and unreasonable and unreasoning impulses, and sometimes like an intelligent being, with judgment, reflection and forethought. When a man is true to his higher nature, and under the dominion of reason, he will act only in obedience to some motive or another, be it what it may. That is to say, man, *as man*, can never exercise his free will in any way whatever without a determining cause.

Though these determining causes are most various and most numerous, the most general and widespread of all are those which arise from the fear of pain. The dread of pain and suffering may be the lowest and most unworthy motive with which a person can be inspired. This we will not deny. Our contention is, that it is the commonest and the

most universal. Whereas some motives appeal only to high and noble natures, this appeals to all, and will influence even those who are too degraded and animal to be reached by any other.

It begins to assert its power at the earliest age. A mother instructs her little children, and instils into their tender minds principles of obedience and reverence, by threats of pain, as the penalty for any violation of her commands. To be put in a corner; to be deprived of some favourite dish; to be sent off to bed while the sun is still high in the heavens, and without the customary caress: or, in cases of more serious faults, to be whipped with the birch-rod, constitute motives strengthening and bracing up the will to act in accordance with what is right and just. Even at the most tender age, suffering and disgrace are employed to deter the would-be offender from the commission of evil.

Years pass. The child grows up to be a boy. His will strengthens, his passions develop, and he is full of animal spirits which need control. He is sent off to school. Here he has certain work to do, and not always congenial or agreeable work. He is expected to rise early, and to sit still, for many hours a-day, on a hard bench in the study hall. He must apply his mind to his books; and construe, and parse, and translate Latin and Greek, French and German. He must puzzle over geome-

try and algebra and chemistry; and commit to memory history, literature, geography and much else, which entail labour and trouble. In a word, he has many a hard duty to perform, many a difficult task to fulfil, which are not to his taste. What supplies him with the requisite motive? Well, there may be many things, but one of these, and the *only* one we are now concerned with, is punishment. He will be detained in the study-place during playtime; he will be forced to remain at his desk while his companions are cricketing, or bathing, or skating; or else, if the fault be a serious one, he may even be feruled or flogged. Thus the cane, and the birch-rod, and the ferule, are held out as incentives to virtuous conduct. The fear of punishment, and the dread of suffering, will supply a boy with a motive, and generally a very effective motive, to restrain his inclination, and to brace himself up to carry through his allotted task, even when tedious, monotonous, and uninteresting. In this way he is taught to control his lower propensities by the exercise of reason, and to hold the mastery over his passions, and to be guided in all his actions by principle rather than by inclination.

And, just as the child passes from the nursery to the college, so, a few years later, the youth passes from the college into the wide world. The schoolmaster is no longer there with his stern

voice and menacing rod. True. But the threat of punishment still hangs over him. In place of the schoolmaster he finds the State, the machinery of the law—in a word, the Executive.

Certain social duties are to be attended to; property and life must be safeguarded, and order maintained within these realms. To secure all this the Government has recourse to fines, incarceration, transportation and to executions by rope or guillotine. Men hear of plank beds, and bread and water diet, and of many lashes with the cat; and when higher and nobler motives fail, the thought of these things supplies them with strong arguments for leading decent, honest and sober lives.

How powerful and really efficacious such motives are, no one can doubt who seriously reflects what a panic there was a few years ago in London, when a disorganisation seemed probable among the police. Citizens were heard asking one another in alarm: "If the police fail us; if they cease to patrol the streets, what will become of the city? What will become of the miles and miles of shops and stores filled with untold treasures and riches?" It never occurred to any one that the mere sense of honour, justice, of virtue among the roughs, would act as a sufficient restraint; or that an exhortation to keep God's Commandments would save their valuables

from the hands of the multitude if once let loose upon them without rein or bridle. Yet what is that but to confess that men, who will listen to no other argument, are controlled and restrained by fears of pain?

Indeed it is nature's method as well as man's. Violate a law of nature, and nature will punish the offender. A little child is taught to balance itself, and to walk upright, by the pain it suffers in its repeated falls; so, also, it will resist the attractions of the bright dancing flames, and learn, in course of time, to keep a respectful distance from the fire—but not until after it has once or twice burnt its fingers. So, again, excess in eating is punished by inconvenience and interior aches, and the experience of such after-effects causes the greedy gourmand to put some sort of bridle on his appetite.

Though instances might be multiplied indefinitely, enough has been said to show that the dread of punishment exists among men, as a very real and practical motive; and that the menace of temporal pain does actually exercise a marked and most appreciable influence on their lives and conduct, restraining, controlling, and directing them at every turn.

Now, what we wish to ask is this: How comes it that this dread of pain, which is inherent in our very nature; which accompanies us through life;



which checks us as children ; which influences us as youths ; and which restrains us, even as fully-grown men, should suddenly fail of its effects, and lose all its power so soon as it is transferred to what is spiritual and supernatural? Why, in a word, do the threats of the parent, the school-master, and the civil government, in turn, inspire a respect and a fear which the threats of God Himself are often unable to excite? Why do so many, who shrink from the puny sufferings that man can inflict, feel no fear of the inextinguishable fires of hell?

This is contrary to reason, and the very acme of folly. If we fear disgrace before men ; if we shrink from imprisonment in a dark, comfortless cell, far from friends and companions ; if we shudder at the thought of a violent death upon the scaffold, why do we not grow pale and sicken with dread, when by grievous sin we have rendered ourselves liable to a punishment, compared with which the fiercest of earthly agonies must appear tolerable ; if not positively sweet and delightful ! If the remembrance of the infamous gallows-tree, and of the hangman's thongs strapping the murderer's limbs together ; the fixing of the dreaded cord about his neck ; the drawing of the bolt, and then the awful drop, followed by eternal silence— if that remembrance is generally sufficient to stem the fiercest torrent of anger, and to subdue and

force back the most violent desire of revenge, how is it that the infinitely greater agony of damnation is so little able to deter men from mortal sin, even under much less provocation?

Pause for a moment to consult sane reason. Reason clearly lays down the following axioms: First, of two pains the milder should be preferred; secondly, where two pains are of equal intensity the briefer should always be chosen rather than the more prolonged; thirdly, an uncertain and merely probable punishment which may perhaps never be inflicted is to be risked rather than one which is certain, inevitable and unerring.

These, I take it, are self-evident truisms. Let us now apply them to the punishment of sin: to the pains of the damned. In all three cases we shall find that hell ought to be feared immeasurably more than any possible earthly calamity.

First, *A less suffering is to be preferred to a greater*; consequently, not merely the ordinary trials of life, but the worst disgrace, the fiercest torment, the deepest grief, the most unbearable loss, should be preferred to sin, which renders us worthy of hell fire. For what are all earth's torments compared with hell? Just nothing at all. What is the accumulation of every possible earthly misfortune when contrasted with the pain of unquenchable fire? A thing of no account. To be bound hand and foot by infernal chains; to be

cast into interior darkness ; to be salted with fire ; to witness nothing but tortures ; to hear nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth ; to be perpetually gnawed by the worm that dieth not ; to cry for ever like the rich man, *crucior in hac flamma*, and to receive no consolation or rest ; to be deprived of every good, and to be oppressed with every evil, such is a feeble statement of the agonies of hell. And if this be hell, surely to remember it ought to inspire us with vastly greater fear than any other consideration whatsoever. For since no torment or disgrace we can experience in this life can at all approach in intensity the torment and disgrace of damnation, we should be prepared to endure anything and everything rather than incur the risk of losing our souls by mortal sin.

This would be absolutely true, even if hell were but temporal, and destined to last but a few score of centuries ; but we know that when once in hell, then “time shall be no more.” This brings us to the second law, *viz.*, *Where the intensity of two states of suffering is equal, a shorter term of suffering is to be preferred to a longer one.*

Now compare the duration of hell’s torments with those of this life. What do I say?—“compare?” A hopeless task? We cannot institute such a comparison. No comparison is so much

as possible. How are we to compare that which ends with that which never ends? How compare time with eternity! To suffer for a thousand, or a hundred thousand, or even a million years; ah! of that we may possibly form some faint notion; but even a million years is not eternity. It is no fraction of eternity. If deducted from eternity that limitless duration would not be in any way lessened. A million certainly represents a gigantic number. Even with the best will in the world we can in no way grasp its full significance or adequately realise its contents. Merely to count a million would occupy a considerable time. If we were to begin counting one, two, three, four, five, etc., as quickly as possible, and continue the task all day and all night without interruption, three entire days and nights would pass before we could reach a million. Yet after as many million of centuries have passed as there are leaves on the trees eternity will still be beginning. Let a single atom represent a million million centuries of duration, and then reflect that after as many million million of centuries have passed away as there are particles of matter in earth, sun, and moon, and all the stars, eternity will still be only just beginning—in fact, *always* beginning; never half-way through, never a third, or a hundredth, or a millionth part of its way through, but ever beginning, ever young. No

man can understand this. No one with his puny mind can look into eternal futurity, endless and infinite! Man boasts of doing many things in these days. He will measure the depths of ocean, the diameter of the earth, its orbit round the sun, the distance of even the fixed stars. One thing, however, he cannot do; one thing exceeds all his power and genius: and that is, to measure eternity, to realise the duration of hell; since that would be to measure the measureless, to fathom the unfathomable. There is, indeed, but one thing more awful than the pain of hell, and that is its duration. If man is capable of being frightened into obedience by anything, surely one would have thought it would be by the dogma of hell. All other terrors sink into insignificance when compared with it, and dwindle away into nothing. And yet, so weak has faith grown that, in these days, there are multitudes more afraid of a policeman's baton! Thousands stand in greater fear of the constable than of all the terrors of the bottomless pit. The first does actually exercise some little restraint upon them; the second exercises none. If men, like the brute beast, had no sense, and were unable to balance pain with pain; if they possessed no means of comparing the temporal with the eternal, we might better understand their lives of criminal indulgence, and watch with less surprise the



thousands ripening for hell, till at last they drop off, one by one, to feed the quenchless fires. But that *reasonable* men, so keenly sensitive to temporal pains, should be so indifferent to eternal pains, is veritably a mystery.

Let us now contrast the human and Divine punishments from the point of view of their inevitableness. Sufferings in this world are not absolutely certain of overtaking us. A criminal may not be discovered by the minions of the law; a prisoner may escape from his confinement; disease or fever may rob even the scaffold of its victim, and set the cruelest murderer free from the hands of human justice. The threats of pain and punishment on this side of the grave are ever accompanied by some degree of uncertainty. But there is no uncertainty in the case of the eternal punishment reserved for the unrepentant sinner. He cannot escape from the hands of God. Nothing can liberate him from the dungeons of hell. He may be as clever and as cunning, as bold and as daring as possible, but all his cunning and cleverness is but childless folly in the eyes of God, and can avail him nothing. The damned sinner cannot even destroy his existence as, in this world, he may destroy his physical life. No escape lies open to him. When God condemns, there is none to deliver.

In this world we hear of men, not merely fear-

ing ignominy and shame, but fearing them to such a degree that they will even take their own lives in order to escape. The example of the informer Pigott, who rather than face an infuriated public blew out his brains, is but one out of countless thousands of similar instances. There is no such means of escaping the penalty of unrepented sin. So soon as a man consents to mortal sin hell is as certainly his portion, so long as the sin remains upon him, as that there is a God in heaven. He must face the disgrace, the shame, the pains and torments, without rest, without sympathy, without hope, and without interruption, for ever and ever and ever.

Who is there bearing this in mind can so far forget himself as to violate a command of God? As St. Augustine so truly observes: "One who commits mortal sin must have lost either his faith or his reason; he must be an infidel or a lunatic; *i.e.*, either he has no faith, and does not believe in the existence of hell, or else, if he believes and still sins, he must be out of his mind". Thus, in the sinner, folly reaches its lowest depths, and can go no further—it has sounded the basest string of stupidity.

If we compare the punishment of sin with other evils, either (1) in intensity, or (2) in duration, or (3) in the certainty of its infliction, we find that it exceeds them all in an immeasurable degree.

And this is important to remember; for as one nail drives out another, so will a greater fear drive out a lesser. Instances of this truth are constantly arising even in the daily occurrences of life. A traveller in the dense African forests trembles if he suddenly finds himself face to face with a ferocious beast; and would naturally fly from it with all speed; but if a yet greater danger menace him he will turn round, put on a bold front and face the lesser evil. As the greatest of England's poets says: "I would shun a bear, but if my flight lay towards the raging sea I would meet the bear i' the mouth".

So, too, many a task imposed by God may seem hard and difficult to weak nature; but when it resolves itself into a question of choosing between humble submission to the labours and trials of this life, or passing an eternity in the region of the damned—then no room is left for hesitation or debate. As the author of the *Imitation of Christ* so pertinently says: "To many this seems a hard saying: 'Deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow Jesus'; but much harder will it be to hear those last words, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire'" (Book ii.).

Men sin in order to escape a momentary pain, and so expose themselves to eternal pain. Some find it too much to be asked to abstain on Fridays; to fast in Lent; to deny themselves a sen-

sual delight; or to leave their amusing novel, or their stroll in the park, in order to hear a Mass of obligation; and for the sake of the trifling satisfaction and pleasure that sins afford, they scruple not to wreck their whole future, to offend God, and thereby to place themselves in imminent danger of actual damnation.

So lightly are the judgments of God esteemed that men in their fatal blindness seem to think it hardly worth their while to stir hand or foot to escape them. Consider the prevalence of drunkenness, impurity, cursing, swearing, anger, vindictiveness and neglect of Mass on Sundays. Yet, who would deliberately reduce himself to the bestial state of drunkenness who fully realised the hell of the drunkard. Who, for the sake of momentary unclean pleasure, or for the sake of indulging anger, revenge or ill-feeling, would calmly submit to the penalty of endless torments?

But, alas! men do not, and will not reflect. Of the *present* moment they think, not of the *future*. It is the interest of the passing hour that engrosses them, that engages their thoughts and occupies their minds; what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and how they shall clothe themselves, and what sort of hat or bonnet will suit them best; and how they may best divert and amuse themselves, and kill the fleeting hour: such are the lines along which their thoughts, like shadows,

flitter to and fro. Or else they are wholly given up to the interests of their business or profession, or to seeking how to make a fortune, to better their social condition, to increase their resources, and to enlarge their income. Matters, in a word, which have to do with their temporary life, and not with their eternal; with this world rather than with the next.

Hence if men commit sin and defile their souls with hideous crimes, it is not because God leaves them without sufficient motive to resist temptation, but simply because they refuse to have recourse to such motives. God has provided the strongest and most powerful incentives; but they are thrown away, and their influence is utterly lost, because men will not ponder over them nor keep them before their minds. While the infallible Spirit of God declares that they "who think of their last end shall never sin," so, on the other hand, He assures us that "with desolation is the whole world laid desolate because there is no man who considereth in his heart".



## CHAPTER V.

### HEROES : TRUE AND FALSE.

“It is the joy of man’s heart to admire where he can; nothing so lifts him from all his mean imprisonments, were it but for moments, as true admiration.”—T. CARLYLE.

**M**EN are readily impressed by whatever is grand and noble and generous. Even those who are timid and spiritless themselves cannot help paying an inward tribute of honour and respect to the high courage and daring self-sacrifice they witness in others. In fact, a great soul and a noble character command respect and attention wherever they are found, whether in Church or State. Hence the world has its heroes just as the Church has hers. It points with pride to its Wellingtons, its Nelsons and its Livingstones; points to them as to men who have deserved well of their country, and done much and dared much for the public good; whether it be by conquering hostile bands, discovering unknown regions, or opening out new channels for commerce and industry. Their praises are sounded far and wide; their names become household words, and while living they are fêted and applauded wheresoever they go. We do not wish to detract one iota from their fair fame. On the

contrary, all honour be to them for their generosity and daring. All we are anxious to do is to point out that these are the heroes of this world, and that all their greatness is but small and contemptible when compared with that of the heroes whom the Church commemorates, *viz.*, the glorious Saints of God. These alone will be found worthy of unmixed admiration.

Indeed, the heroes of this earth are but the heroes of a day. Their fame endures but for an hour. Vanity is written upon all their works, and the mould that covers their bones will soon also hide their glory from us. History may, indeed, chronicle their deeds; nations may prate and prattle of them for a period; but they themselves are passed away. Gone! Aye, gone where neither the praise nor the blame of men can follow them; gone where neither flattery can elate nor calumny disturb. Who was once so famed as the great Alexander, King of Macedon? Two thousand years ago the whole earth was ringing with his praises. Where is he now? Who now thinks or speaks of this renowned soldier who subdued the Greeks, defeated the Persians, and conquered Syria and Egypt, Parthia and Media, and India, and then sighed for other lands to conquer? . . . Where is Cæsar, that mighty general and warrior, who led his victorious troops through Gaul, and invaded Britain, and made himself master of the

whole Roman world, and entered triumphantly into Rome with all the glory of a dictator, and who was styled by his enthusiastic countrymen "Father of his nation"? What is now left of all his greatness? What, in the words of Holy Scripture, hath pride profited him?

Or to come to more modern times. Where is the most notorious man that this century has produced, Napoleon the First? Where is that marvellous genius, who by sheer force of character raised himself from a position of obscurity to the very highest pinnacle of worldly glory and ambition: he who routed the best armies of Europe, and placed almost the entire civilised world under his feet? who had himself crowned Emperor of France, and King of Italy, and parcelled out kingdoms among his brothers as though they had been provinces; and made his very name a terror if not a curse in every land?

Where are these, and the hundreds and thousands of lesser fame; the mighty, the rich, the powerful, the prosperous, the wise? Where are they who once kept the world in awe; they at whose voice nations stood still and held their breath, and at whose presence the earth itself was troubled? Whither have they fled? Whither indeed? . . . Their bodies have long since mingled with the dust; but their souls, their spiritual and imperishable souls? where are *they* now? Where?

I ask, and the echo murmurs back a dismal "*where?*" That is, indeed, a matter we cannot determine. This alone we may say, and let this suffice: they have entered into a land where pride, and ambition, and lust of conquest, and earthly grandeur, are no passports to eternal glory. They dwell in regions where mere human wisdom and cunning are powerless to aid, and where humility and charity, and patience and forbearance, and purity and innocence profit more than all the treasures that the earth contains. No! the heroes of this world have little in them of what is truly great.

To whom then may this epithet be more justly applied? To those surely who have conquered not kingdoms, but themselves; who have vanquished and subdued not peoples and nations, but their own rebellious appetites, unruly passions and wayward propensities. In one word, they alone deserve the name of hero who have fought the good fight, under the banner of the Cross, and emulated the heroic life and sublime example of Him who was crucified thereon. The noblest characters in all history are the virgins, the confessors and the martyrs; in short, the saints of God, whose names are emblazoned in the book of life. *Their* glory shall never fade! It is as imperishable as heaven itself. It is not dependent upon the fickle judgment of a silly, fastidious

world. It is neither made nor marred by the breath of the multitude, nor by the applause of the masses. It is as far removed beyond the reach of envious tongues as heaven is above earth. It is more enduring than the very ground upon which we tread, more firmly rooted and established than the very foundations of the world; for these shall one day crumble away, but it will remain. The stars of heaven shine not with so bright a lustre; the noonday sun itself is not so resplendent as the least of God's saints: for all these mighty orbs shall grow dim, and their fires shall be spent, but the souls of the just are in the hands of God, and their thrones are established for ever and ever, and nothing shall ever come to dim their matchless glory, or to cast so much as a passing shadow over their beauty and unclouded happiness. But so long as God is God, so long shall they exult in His possession and bask in the brightness of His presence.

These are our models and our examples. These alone are worthy of our imitation. But, alas! how few amongst us are making any serious and sustained effort to resemble them. With what little earnestness we struggle, and how weak and spasmodic are all our endeavours. No wonder then that the chasm which separates us from the champions of faith yawns so wide and deep. Yet, considering that both we and they were



made precisely for the same sublime end, the contrast between us and them is terrible to contemplate. That a vast difference really exists is clear. That there must be some adequate cause to account for this difference is equally clear. Our first duty, therefore, must be to find it out. We must get a distinct view of it, that we may then proceed at once to remove the obstacle from our path. The saints run along the way of God's commandments; we can scarcely keep our footing. They advance with giant's strides; we do but totter and fall, and rise only to fall again, like infants just beginning to walk. Why is this? We must strive to search out the genuine cause, for unless we can, as it were, lay our finger on the sore, and say "there is the root of the malady," we may hardly dare to hope to apply a suitable remedy, and all our labour will be in vain.

What reason shall we assign? Perhaps, kind readers, you will reply: it is entirely due to our surroundings; it is all owing to the cankered state of society at the present day. The world is so wicked, so steeped in every form of vice and villainy: even people who are not downright iniquitous are yet so worldly, so selfish, so indifferent; there is so much bad example, bad literature, bad plays and immodest representations. The seeds of infidelity, of atheism, of agnosticism

and of scepticism are sown broadcast up and down the land by means of papers, periodicals, books, pamphlets, reviews and magazines. The very air is impregnated with a thousand noxious vapours of false doctrines. Why, every breeze comes laden with the murmurs of some new doubt or some fresh sophism against the faith. It is hard, you will urge, to live through all this unaffected and unscathed. To exercise heroic virtue amid such a deluge of evil were as impossible as to live in the depths of the ocean and not to be drowned, or to walk through the midst of a fire and not to be scorched by the flames. But woe to us if we flatter ourselves with such vain, if specious, excuses. The true reason of our spiritual lethargy is not the general state of the world, bad though it undoubtedly is, for history gives the lie to such an assumption at once. It informs us that there have been Saints, and great Saints, living at times and in places much worse than ours ; yea, even amidst idolaters and pagans, and all the corruptions and dissoluteness of morals that disgraced the effete civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome. To seek to excuse our want of fervour on the plea of our surroundings and the corruptions of the world is to put a bandage on our eyes, and wilfully to court deception. This is but a baseless excuse, an unworthy pretext.

Then you will, perhaps, exclaim: "It is all the fault of my profession, or my trade, or the peculiar nature of my employment, or of my position in life? What scope have I, forsooth, for the exercise of heroic virtue? How can I attain to true sanctity while discharging my ordinary and very homely and commonplace duties? Such representations may, at first glance, seem more plausible; but here, again, history itself testifies in the most emphatic way that sanctity, even in its more heroic forms, is absolutely independent of position and station, and may be attained in any rank and condition. It proves for our encouragement and consolation not merely that there *may* be, but that there *have actually been*, Saints and chosen servants of God in every possible walk of life, from that of the Great St. Louis, King of France, ruling over a mighty empire, and swaying the destinies of an entire nation, down to that of a St. Benedict Labré, clothed in rags and tatters, and begging from door to door a crust of bread for the love of God. Between these two canonised saints how great is the contrast! Yet every intermediate stage has its representatives among the saints of God's Church: yes, kings and queens, princes and princesses, warriors, statesmen, priests, monks, artisans, farm-labourers, servants, paupers, beggars and slaves have all furnished splendid proofs of the ubiquity of Divine grace, and the power of

the abiding presence of God in every faithful heart. From this it is clear that the second excuse is no better than the first, and that no more solid justification can be found in one plea than in the other.

Deeper and further must we probe into the subtle windings of the heart and character of the Saints if we would search out their secrets and understand the essential distinction between them and ourselves. It is something far more personal and intrinsic than any chance disparity of state or employment. Sanctity itself has little, if anything, to do with what is external. "The kingdom of God is within you." "All the beauty of the King's daughter is within," says the Holy Ghost. The difference between one who is, and one who is not a saint, is to be sought not in the things done, but in the manner in which they are done. It is the perfect purity of heart, the uprightness of intention, and the singleness of purpose; or, in other words, the internal disposition of will that marks the saint and separates him from the sinner. The saints did very much what we do; their duties were almost exactly what ours are; but they went about them in a totally different spirit, impelled by a different impulse, and in obedience to a different motive. They measured every act and event of life by a different standard, and directed all their actions, however humble and com-

monplace, by the maxims of the Gospel, and the teaching of Christ.

Such is a brief and incomplete statement of the difference between a saint and a sinner; but how shall we now account for this internal difference? Whence does it proceed? Well, it appears to me that we may reduce it entirely to one simple cause; and though it be an extremely simple one, I believe it will be found influential enough fully to account for the contrast. The ultimate cause of the difference between a saint and a sinner will be found to lie in the difference in the *quality* of their faith. The light of Divine faith illuminating the mind and warming the heart of a true disciple of Christ, is full, bright, clear and transparent; whereas in most of us it is blurred, obscure and dull. It is not that we accept a different doctrine, but that our mode of apprehending it is so different. All Catholics, of course (without exception), profess the self-same truths; the dogmas and definitions of the Catholic Church are as binding upon us as upon the saints. But how differently they are received! The saints realised their meaning, and were intimately conscious of their truth; we seem but vaguely to suspect it. Our belief is all but dead, theirs was ever full of the sap of Divine strength and vigour. We may illustrate our meaning by an example. Thus we are taught the awful doctrine of hell; and firmly



do we believe that an eternal punishment of the most agonising kind awaits the commission of even one deliberate mortal sin. Nay, more; we openly and unhesitatingly confess it, and we acknowledge its justice as well as its truth. But in what manner do we bring this most awful fact home to our minds? What is the nature of our belief? Well, we must judge from the effects. Does the thought of hell, when we have deserved it by our sins, make our blood run cold with abject terror? Does it clothe sin with a malice and heinousness that nothing else possesses in our eyes? Does it excite within us a strong revulsion and hatred against sin which surpasses every other hatred? Does the contemplation of those raging fires, and of the bottomless pit, and of the worm that never dies, cause us to fly away from the very shadow of sin as from the jaws of a hissing serpent? Does this thought invest our wills with a giant's strength when wrestling with temptation, and confer firmness and stability upon our holy purpose and good resolutions? Does the doctrine of everlasting damnation, in fine, exercise a practical effect upon our daily lives? If not, if it does nothing of the kind, then what is hell to us but a painted fire? What are all its terrors but the fevered imaginations and insane ravings of a deluded brain? What are its most excruciating tortures but an idle, empty tale, or a

foolish and baseless dream, signifying nothing? It was not in this way that the saints understood the infallible warnings of the Son of God, who holds in His hands the keys of the abyss, and the reins of life and of death. Look, for instance, at St. Jerome in the vast solitude of the Egyptian desert, the companion, as he himself informs us, of scorpions and wild beasts. Consider him clad in his penitential garb of sackcloth and ashes, his cheeks wet with tears, and his eyes red with weeping. In his right hand he grasps a jagged stone, with which he beats his naked breast till the blood flows and trickles freely down to the ground. Why this solitude? Why this life of prayer and penance? We give the answer in his own words: "*Ob gehennæ metum tali me carceri damnaveram*"—"Through fear of hell I condemn myself to this lonely prison". So, too, of St. Peter Damian it is stated that the colour would fade away from his cheeks, and the very hair of his head would stand up on end, at the bare remembrance of the eternity of untold pain and anguish. Or, to take another instance. When St. Francis Borgia was one day questioned as to the cause of his excessive gloominess and depression, his all-sufficient reply was: "My meditation this morning was on the judgment of God on impenitent sinners". Even the great St. Paul, who was raised to the third heavens, and whose entire life,

from the moment of his conversion, was spent in heroic labours for God, was not without fear. So from confiding in his good works, he tells us that he "chastised his body, and brought it into subjection, lest having preached to others" he himself might become "a castaway"; that is to say, lest he might be eternally damned. Yes, to the saints hell bore an awful significance. To them it was a greater reality than the sun shining in the heavens, and more intimately present than the earth upon which they trod; it is only by the sinner and the thoughtless man of the world—by those, in a word, who have most cause to tremble, that it is disregarded, or, perhaps, even made a subject of idle jest or unseemly merriment.

So it is precisely with all other stupendous truths of Divine revelation. What we have remarked concerning the doctrine of hell is quite as true of the doctrine of heaven. Call to mind what we are taught regarding the rewards of the just; read what the Scriptures tell us of Paradise. Its beauty we know is matchless, its glory beyond compare, its joys unknown to earth, its peace surpassing all hope or thought, its happiness inexpressible and unthinkable, and its duration endless and unfailing. Now, observe, we know all this, and we acknowledge all this; and then? Well, then, we fling it all away in a moment, without one pang of remorse, and for the sake of any sin-

ful pleasure or unclean delight. Such is the vividness of our faith! We believe heaven to be all that I have described, and immeasurably more, one instant, and the next we proceed to barter it away without compunction in exchange for some senseless gratification or sordid satisfaction that vanishes almost as soon as it is grasped. Would such a depth of folly and wickedness be likely, yea rather, let us ask, would it be so much as possible, were our faith vigorous and vivid? Alas! what manner of faith is this? Does it deserve the name? Oh! call it by some other word; let us not prostitute language by speaking of this as "faith". Men blame Esau, and declare him to have been a fool because he sold his earthly birthright for a mess of pottage; but Esau was a prodigy of learning, a Solon of wisdom, a perfect Solomon, compared to a Catholic who sells his birthright to the devil for an unclean pleasure or the sensual delight of an hour.

How differently the idea of heaven affected the saints. Listen to St. Teresa, for instance, breaking her heart for the possession of God in the beatific vision, and longing, if she could not die at once and be with Him, at least to suffer more that she might merit more: "*aut mori, aut pati*". Such value did she set on the least delights of God's eternal kingdom that she used to declare her readiness to remain amid all earthly torments

till the end of time, to merit (not heaven, to which she was certainly entitled already), but to merit, were it possible, merely one additional degree of glory there.<sup>1</sup> "If I were asked," she wrote, "which I preferred: to endure *all the trials of the world until the end of it*, and then receive *one slight degree of additional glory*; or, *without any suffering of any kind*, to enter into glory of a slightly lower degree, I would accept—oh! how willingly!—all those trials for *one slight degree of fruition in the contemplation of the greatness of God*." And so it was in different measure with all the great servants of God. The hope and anticipation of the endless beatitude of heaven shed a glow of happiness and peace over their whole lives, and urged them to deeds of heroic virtue.

Similar considerations may be made concerning our faith in God's love. He is our Creator, our Benefactor, our Father, and our nearest and dearest Friend. To Him we must acknowledge we owe, without a single exception, all that we possess and enjoy, in fact all that makes life worth living; and not only all that we enjoy, but the very capacity of love, of happiness and of enjoyment, and the very sensibility to the impressions of joy-provoking causes. This is evidently the case; yet what return of love does this astounding truth awaken within our breasts? It is certainly

<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa, *Life*, xxxvii., § 3.



a most mysterious psychological fact (though unhappily a very common one), that it hardly awakens any.

Let us calmly state the case. Thus we verily believe Him to be the all-powerful and irresistible God, infinitely removed above us, yet so passionately fond of us, and so devoted to our interests, that He goes to the unheard-of lengths of positively dying the most cruel of deaths for our sakes. We acknowledge all this—did we refuse to acknowledge it our conduct would not be so utterly inexplicable and indefensible—we acknowledge, not merely that He loves us with a love which is verily distracting and bewildering in its mysterious intensity, but likewise that He can do all things, and that everything depends upon Him: that, for example, He has the power of life and death over us, and the supreme and absolute control of all our concerns; and that, though He might indeed make us eternally wretched, yet He ardently yearns to render us eternally happy, if only we will not persistently hinder and impede Him at every turn by our folly and sin. We acknowledge that He comes to us with His hands full of heavenly treasures, and that He longs to surround us hereafter with every honour, dignity, glory and happiness, if only we will exercise a little patience. So much for our belief: now for our extraordinary behaviour. Though we believe all that I have

stated concerning God, we nevertheless offend Him, insult Him, and treat Him as we would not treat a sworn enemy. We sin against Him, wilfully, knowingly, deliberately, and in His very presence, as though He were powerless to avenge! Before His very face we mock Him, deny Him, cover Him with derision and scorn. We prefer a miserable trifle before Him; choose in preference the vilest and most degrading indulgences; and willingly renounce all claim to His possession for ever in heaven for the sake of the first bauble that chance or the devil flings in our way! Certainly the patience of God is the most fathomless of mysteries.

Now, I ask, would such conduct be possible were our faith strong, deep and thoroughly sound? No! most undoubtedly: such intolerable insolence and ingratitude are never and can never be found, save where faith in God's power and goodness and love is vague, dim and obfuscated. This, then, seems to be the fundamental distinction between the saint and the ordinary Christian. The one lives rooted to the earth, with the sublime and heavenly truths hidden from him; the other moves in a totally different world, his mind habitually filled with a profound sense of the intense reality and nearness of what is beyond the reach of the material eye. To the latter, heaven and hell, God and the saints, and the eternal life of the blessed,

and the whole invisible creation, are little more than abstractions or empty speculations; to the former, on the contrary, they are more actual, more intimately present, and far more influential factors in his life's history than any of the changing and shifting scenes of the world around him can ever be. The unknown can never be an object either of fear or of desire. No man can reasonably hope to be deterred from the commission of sin by the thought of hell, unless he has tried to understand its nature, and the pains and penalties it involves; nor can any one sincerely long for heaven who has not taken the trouble to learn something of its worth and blessedness. And, assuredly, no one can rightly love God and yearn to serve Him loyally who has not often dwelt in thought upon His infinite beauty, unparalleled goodness, ineffable love, and His other Divine perfections. And, conversely, the more we reflect upon such subjects, and read and study and apply ourselves, the greater will be their influence upon us. If, therefore, we would draw closer to God before life is done; if we would serve Him with greater constancy and generosity, and render our salvation more secure, and our future life more glorious and blessed, we must not begrudge time spent in earnest thought and silent contemplation. The extraordinary thing is that we find time to do a thousand things of no importance whatever, but

no time to devote to this. We visit our friends, we read our newspapers, we take our strolls, we travel about, we amuse and recreate ourselves in a thousand ways. Time is found for all that; but of time to spare for meditation on the sublime and eternal truths we can find none. Man is, indeed, as Carlyle somewhere quaintly observes, "somewhat of an owl."

## CHAPTER VI.

### INCONSISTENCY, OR OUR FAITH AND OUR PRACTICE.

“Absque meditationis exercitio, nullus, secluso miraculo Dei speciali, ad rectissimam religionis christianæ normam pertingit.”—GERSON.

WHEN we pass in review the various arguments that exist in proof of the true Church and consider their number and their force, we are often puzzled to explain how it is that so many apparently earnest men still continue to resist her claims and to question her authority.

Yet however much this thought may exercise our minds there is another of a far more personal, and (for us at least) of a far more practical character, which few of us trouble ourselves about at all; and that is why we who *do believe* so firmly in the stupendous truths of revelation should nevertheless be so very little affected by them.

That a man who has no belief in a future life should centre all his happiness and pleasure upon this, and should try to extract all the enjoyment he can from it, is the most natural thing in the world; that he should be always plotting and scheming to rise in the social scale, to become rich, influential and of importance; that he should



think of such things during the day and dream of them by night is all intelligible enough; but that *we* who profess the Catholic faith, who acknowledge that we are pilgrims and sojourners upon earth, who look upon this life as but a short avenue leading up to an endless eternity; that we should take the interest we do in what we know to be so exceedingly flimsy and fleeting, and should attach so much importance to what we are perfectly well aware is empty, vain and unsatisfying, *that* I take to be a far more extraordinary and difficult problem.

We profess belief, and we do in reality believe every dogma, and yet we seem to be able to reconcile with such a profession a line of conduct diametrically opposite. What we openly affirm with our lips we are perpetually denying by our actions; and what we emphatically assert in words to be of the most vital importance we declare by almost every act of our lives to be of no importance at all. However rational we may be in business, in politics and in our social relations, we seem to be wholly devoid of reason so soon as we begin to deal with the spiritual and the supernatural. Perhaps some of my readers will begin to object, and will protest that I am exaggerating and overstating the case, and that we are not really so inconsistent after all; so suffer me to illustrate the justice of my contention by one or

two examples. We shall best serve our purpose if we examine a few points upon which we are all thoroughly agreed. Let us then pass by all matters of mere opinion and confine ourselves entirely to matters of certainty—to truths, in fact, which we as Catholics are bound to believe. We shall then see how little correspondence there is between our conduct and our creed. We shall find that instead of corresponding they are grossly at variance. Thus, *e.g.*, we believe (*a*) sin to be the greatest evil in the world; that no other evil can for one moment be put on a level with it; that even the smallest deliberate venial sin is a more real misfortune than any loss of health or fortune however great, that neither in itself nor in its consequences can any merely human calamity for one instant bear any sort of proportion to it. We are certain, with a Divine certainty, that for no consideration whatsoever, not even to save our very life, no, nor a hundred thousand lives, would it be right or permissible to commit the least deliberate venial sin, even a passing sin of thought. This is not a pious exaggeration but the literal truth, and a truth which all confess—in fact, to ask if we believe this, is to ask if we are Catholics. Of course we do.

But what is our conduct? Is it consistent? Does it in any way harmonise with our creed? Consider our position as regards venial sins, imperfections,

small offences, lesser faults. How do we exhibit our horror of them: our sense of their enormity, baseness and ingratitude? Do we for instance manifest in everyday life a decided and unhesitating preference to suffer every species of calamity, distress, pain, even death, rather than allow our souls to be stained with the guilt of venial sin? Do we so guard ourselves from this pest that years pass away without our having to accuse ourselves of so much as one venial fault? May we not rather ask if a month, or a week, or so much as a single day goes by without our being betrayed into some infringement of the law of God? This is what I mean by habitual inconsistency. We *believe* sin to be the greatest of evils, we *act* as though it were the least.

Again, to take another instance, we believe (*b*) Divine Grace to be so inestimable a treasure, that the gaining of one additional degree of it is not merely more advantageous, but *indefinitely* and *immeasurably* more advantageous than the doubling of our fortunes, or the multiplying of all our earthly resources a million times over—that to advance one step in virtue is inconceivably more profitable to us, besides being better in itself, and more pleasing to God, than any advance whatsoever in worldly prosperity, social position and political influence; so that, *e.g.*, we ought, if we possessed them, to be ready to give up the wis-

dom of a Solomon, the riches of a Cræsus, the beauty of an Absalom, and the dignity and influence of a Cæsar, if we could thereby purchase the least particle of Divine Grace, and would even then give an absurdly inadequate price for it. Do we believe all this in sober truth? Do we acknowledge that Grace is a priceless treasure, without parallel or equal in the whole of creation? Well, I distinguish. With our lips we do, and with our intellects too; but only in theory: in practice we do not. Indeed any one considering our lives and studying our aims, aspirations, ambitions and desires, would regard us as a set of the most inveterate liars that ever lived; and might unhesitatingly describe us, one and all, as miserable impostors and contemptible hypocrites, who say one thing but mean exactly the opposite. For how is it possible (they would argue) that men can honestly believe Grace to be the treasure they say it is, while, at the same time, they make no appreciable effort to retain possession of it, or, if already possessed, to increase it—while, in fact, they are more ready and eager to labour, toil and suffer for anything whatsoever rather than for it. Indeed, the hope of wealth, or honour, or fame, can stir them up to far greater enthusiasm, and set their hearts in a far greater blaze, than the hope of any increase of this supernatural treasure, of which they are content merely to utter the praises.

Yet somehow or another we contrive, *de facto*, to reconcile two such opposites. Our faith is sound: yes; but, oh! how dead, and cold, and wanting in power and influence.

Or, to take yet another instance: We are fully aware that time is short and fleeting; that life is not merely brief, but that it is most uncertain; and, what is yet far more important, we are fully aware that (*c*) on this moment of time—on this vanishing instant, which we call “Life”—the whole weight of eternity is ever balancing. A man’s life, even when considered in itself, is but a tiny span; but when compared with eternity it is simply nothing. Yet upon this brief moment of our earthly existence depends that which no created intellect can measure, and which no human plummet can fathom. On it depends, not merely an eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery, inexpressible and unimagined, but on our use of it depends likewise the *degree* of happiness or misery, as the case may be. Indeed, we may say that God has committed to our hands the forming and fashioning of our future, so that it will be just precisely what we make it, neither better nor worse. So that, even supposing we are fortunate enough to reach the kingdom of God, there is still the further question, what will be our position in that eternal kingdom when we get there? If we take the reward of the least among



the blessed for our unit, then, whether our ecstasy of happiness and our delirium of delight is to be represented by ten, or one hundred, or one thousand, or by ten thousand, depends (within limits) upon ourselves.

We know that while breath lasts we may always keep adding and adding to the amount of acquired grace, and, further, that to every degree of grace there is annexed a claim to a corresponding degree of eternal glory, each particle of which out-values ten thousand worlds, besides being eternal and imperishable; in such wise, that we may say, in sober truth, that it rests with ourselves whether, throughout untold ages which our mind grows dizzy in imagining, God is to be better known by us, better loved, and more fully enjoyed. We know all this as we know that the oak depends upon the acorn; but what is so lamentable is that our knowledge of the one fact seems to influence us about as little as our knowledge of the other.

We are not consistent. We neither think, nor speak, nor act as becomes men who sincerely lay these truths to heart. Who, indeed, watching our lives and following us as we go about our daily avocations, would for one instant dream that we are conscious of the fact—that we are positively moment by moment laying down the foundations and drawing out the plan of an interminable future? Who would imagine—viewing our con-

duct—that we are conscious that our actions and thoughts are all stamping, with an indelible mark, our life beyond the grave, and helping, in a very real way, to make or to mar a career which is simply endless and without termination. Yet it must be acknowledged that not one of us has any manner of doubt on the subject when it is fairly put before us.

That the future has its root in the present; that time is the seed of eternity; and that “as a man sows, so he shall reap,” are truths which no Catholic ever dreams of disputing.

In a word, inconsistency marks our lives, is the badge of all our tribe, and extends to almost everything supernatural. I have touched upon three instances, and I might have touched upon three thousand; but let these suffice, for I must hurry on to our next point. Enough, I think, has been said to show that we are inconsistent; the next question that suggests itself is—

Whence comes this extraordinary and deplorable contrast between our belief on the one hand, and our practice on the other? Why is it that we act so unreasonably? How are we to account for it?

It would seem at the first glance that, as a matter of fact, we cannot really believe; it seems so impossible that we can inwardly accept the teaching of the Church, and still act so diametrically

against it. But yet so it is, for there can be no doubt as to the sincerity and genuine faith of many who even sin grievously. We are all bound either to acknowledge the truths of revelation, or else to cease calling ourselves Catholics. The plain statement of our position is that we do *believe* but we do not *realise*.

This, at once, goes a long way to explain the anomaly; for truths affect us only in so far as they come home to us, and most truths of faith do not come home to us at all. For the most part it is like proposing an abstract truth to the undeveloped mind of a child; or it is as though we should inform a school-boy that the nearest fixed star is more than 19,000,000,000,000 miles off. He will accept the doctrine readily enough; but his brain can conjure up no adequate image of such a distance. He believes; but he does not really *know* what it is he believes. He may have some idea of nineteen miles; but nineteen million million miles confuse and puzzle him, and produce no definite impression on his brain. Only after a long habit of comparing and contrasting can he gain some faint idea of such a distance. So is it in the spiritual world; the great truths of Faith affect us so little because so little realised. To believe with a mere implicit adhesion of the mind may be enough for the fulfilment of the precept of Divine Faith; but that the various dogmas

may influence our life, and spur us on to action, and give force to our will, and firmness to our resolutions, and power in temptation, and courage under trial, besides being believed, they must also be to some extent realised—they must enter into the mind, and shine out with a certain brilliancy and lustre of their own, and shed a light and a warmth in the centre of the heart. Could we only succeed in mastering the truths of revelation we should speedily find ourselves supplied with motives abundant and powerful enough to convert even the most indifferent of us into saints and heroes. The motives that exist to induce us to serve God are not merely exceedingly numerous, but they are also of an extraordinary and almost irresistible power, only they are ordinarily (if I may so express myself) allowed to lie beyond the field of vivid consciousness. If, however, we were to bestir ourselves, and to try to draw them within the inner circle of our mind, they are so excessively cogent and persuasive of their own nature that, without actually forcing the will, we may truly affirm they would become, in practice, all but irresistible. We may read this truth in the life of every saint; and there are moments and periods in our lives when we may have perhaps experienced it ourselves.

The more we consider the matter the more convinced we shall be that it is not by believing

anything fresh—not by adding to the articles of our creed, or discovering any new motives—that we shall be moved to change our lives, but that it can only be by the keener realisation of the old truths familiar from childhood, and which we have known ever since we first began to know anything.

Let me give an instance of what I mean from the life of the great St. Francis Borgia, once a gallant courtier and man of the world, and afterwards a religious, a priest and a saint. Now, his conversion is attributed, not to the discovery of any new truths, but simply and solely to a circumstance which brought vividly before his mind, and strongly illuminated, what were very old truths indeed: it was the sight of the dead body of the renowned Isabella, Empress of Spain.

She died at Toledo, and her remains were conveyed in a leaden coffin to Granada. On their arrival, Francis and the magistrates of the city were convened in order to take an official oath that the remains were really those of the empress. The coffin was accordingly opened, and the body exposed to view; the sight that met his eyes converted Francis, and transformed him into a saint. Yet, observe, he learned nothing really new. He needed no one to tell him that Isabella was mortal; that her glory must perish and her beauty fade. Suppose one had asked him, as he gazed



upon his sovereign in the fulness of her health and strength: "Will those eyes that now glisten so brightly one day grow fixed and glassy, and those ruddy lips shrink, stiffen and decay? Will those small white hands, so delicately and wondrously wrought from the clay, ever to clay return?" Had one asked him: "Will that royal heart—that seat of all that is noblest and best—one day stop its beating and grow still forever?" He would have replied unhesitatingly: "Yes;" undoubtedly, "yes". He believed those truths then as firmly as now, only not so vividly. This superficial knowledge did not act upon his life or spur him on to struggle for sanctity and a greater detachment from the world; but when death at last came, and he actually witnessed the change it brought—when he, with the bright and beauteous form of his queen still haunting his memory like a beautiful dream, lifted the ponderous lid and gazed upon the hideous and distorted corpse, and smelt the sickly exhalations and the fetid odour exuding from every pore, pah! and touched the cold, clammy clay, now fast resolving into its primordial elements—he learned a lesson not easily forgotten.

When he considered that ghastly heap of mouldering flesh, as it was but yesterday, clothed with the royal diadem of state, hung with precious robes, adorned with gold, and jewels of priceless

worth, honoured, praised, courted, and cared for—the cynosure of all eyes, the observed of all observers, and then—contrasted it with what it had now become, he not merely knew, believed and acknowledged, but he realised and was made intimately conscious of the transitory nature of all earthly things, and of the vanity of beauty, rank, power, wealth and dominion: truths which had so long but skimmed over the surface of his soul as a mere film now penetrated into its centre: the lesson sank deep down into his heart. Up to this it had never been properly learnt, now it burnt itself, as it were, into his very being, branding itself on his heart with letters of fire. The result was he changed his life, and consecrated himself wholly and unreservedly to God. Returning to his chamber he locked himself in and passed the whole night prostrate in prayer, shedding many torrents of bitter tears. “Ah! fool that I am!” he exclaimed, “what am I struggling for? How much longer shall I waste my time in pursuit of mere shadows and unsubstantial nothings! All is worthless that passes with time: all is vanity and vexation of spirit but the love and service of God.” He bid an eternal farewell to the vanities and pleasures of the world; he quitted the court, and entered upon a new course of serving God with the utmost fervour, and bound himself by oath, should he survive his consort, to enter a re-

ligious state of life. The impression produced on his mind by what he had seen continued strong and undiminished, we are assured by his biographer, during the three and thirty years he survived, and exercised its influence to the last.

The special point that I am anxious that my readers should carry away with them and clearly grasp is that St. Francis was not converted by learning anything he did not already know, but merely by vividly realising a truth which was familiar from his childhood. He was converted by an old truth, but an old truth appealing to him in a new and very striking manner: an old truth illuminated by an unusually strong and lurid light.

What follows? Well, this: that, if we are to be converted from a tepid, careless, listless life, we must not merely believe, but our faith must be lively, bright, clear and penetrating—in fact, we must accustom ourselves to think, to ponder over the invisible truths, and to meditate assiduously. The reason why pleasures, honour, amusements, wealth and other objects by which the world tempts us, have such power over many is that they force themselves upon our notice; they are so obtrusive, so self-asserting, so perpetually ringing their changes in our ears; whereas the spiritual motives offered to us by God are quite the reverse: they are invisible, intangible, beyond the

reach of sense, and come only to those who seek them. We shall never advance till we acquaint ourselves more thoroughly with the truths we profess. The fact is, we are all living in a sort of dream. We see, speak and move among what is unsubstantial, unreal and shadowy, and the great spiritual world, which fades not with time, is all about us, and we know it not. Until, indeed, we consider it worth our while to devote to the contemplation of eternal things some of those long hours which we lavish so readily and so prodigally upon temporal things, we must not, it appears to me, expect to make much progress. The *invisible* can never influence our conduct or be a motive of action *while it remains invisible*. It must be made visible . . . visible to the eyes of faith by meditation.

The analogy between the body and the soul in regard to their respective nourishment is very striking. Food may be in the greatest abundance all around us, but unless it be eaten, digested and assimilated into the system, it will never strengthen or nourish the body; so is it with the spiritual food of the soul, which is Divine truth: till we are prepared to digest it, and meditate upon it, and turn it over in our minds, and familiarise ourselves with it, it will never spur us on to great deeds. "It is only those," as Father Faber so beautifully says, "who are ever conversant

with the great things that God has done for them who will ever be inspired to do great things for the love of Him."

There is evidently but one conclusion to which we can come. We must not merely assent coldly to truths proposed; we must strive to apprehend them and give them an actuality. They must be as real to us as the daylight and the sunshine. We must resolve to direct our thoughts in an especial manner each day, for a certain fixed time, to some one or another of the great truths. It is the surest, the simplest, the most direct means of acquiring sanctity here and eternal glory hereafter. Hence all the saints, without exception, both practised it themselves and exhorted others to do the same. Suarez, one of the greatest theologians, declares it to be morally necessary for all who wish to rise above mere mediocrity. St. Ignatius makes it the basis and foundation of the spiritual life of his order. St. Teresa, that marvellous mistress of the interior life, insists upon it above and before all things. She declares it to be impossible for any one to practise meditation and at the same time to continue leading a sinful and tepid life. He must either abandon tepidity or he must abandon meditation. The two cannot go on together. But why speak of the saints? Has not a far higher authority already spoken in the same sense? Has not the Holy Spirit prom-



ised immunity from the only evil we fear, if we will but reflect upon the great truths? "Think of thy last end and thou shalt never sin." Nay, more, does He not (speaking by the mouth of His prophet) ascribe the widespread sinfulness and wickedness of the world to an absence of this practice, and to nothing else? "With desolation is the whole world laid desolate, *because* there is no man who considereth in his heart."

Is any further proof needed? If we are sincerely anxious to attain to true sanctity, and to enjoy God for all eternity, we surely cannot neglect so powerful and simple a means. One thing is, at all events, clear, *viz.*, a person who cares little about the means, cares little about the end. Self-deception is very easy in this matter. But it is a mere piece of delusion to flatter ourselves that we really desire to lead holy and innocent lives if we begrudge even one half-hour a day spent in meditation. Let us apply this test, and if we cannot bring ourselves to undertake, even though it may be with some little inconvenience, daily meditation, we should, at least, be honest enough to acknowledge that our desire for perfection is very weak, since it extends to the length of doing only what will cost us little or nothing.

## CHAPTER VII.

### UNITY OF FAITH.

“Non habet charitatem qui dividit unitatem.”—ST. AUG.

“Caput visibile est ecclesiae in terris, Vicarius Petri Successor. Sicut ergo Regnum dicitur UNUM ab uno Rege, Civitas ab uno Governatore, Familia ab uno Patre, Grex ab uno Pastore, Exercitus ab uno Duce, Corpus a colligatione membrorum sub uno capite, sic Ecclesia una dicitur quæ in Scripturis vocatur Regnum, Civitas, Familia, Grex, Exercitus, Corpus. De hac unitate dixit Dominus per Ezechielem: *Faciam eos in gentem unam, et Rex unus erit omnibus imperans, Pastor erit unus omnium eorum.*”—J. MARCHANTIUS, p. 165.

JESUS CHRIST came down upon earth, and walked among men, to teach them the truths of eternal life, and to instruct them in all things necessary to salvation. And before quitting the world He bade His apostles and disciples continue this great work which He had begun, and go forth over the face of the whole earth, and teach all nations. He furthermore added, that whosoever accepted His doctrine, and believed, should be saved; whereas, whosoever believed it not, should be condemned; or, in plain English, should be damned for all eternity.

The apostles were commissioned to teach others the truth which Christ had taught them, and to make it known throughout every land. Now, truth is one and the same in all places and at all times. It has none of the properties of the cham-

eleon. It cannot change its form or complexion to suit the conveniences of men. This may be asserted of all truth, whether secular or religious. That a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, or that the whole is greater than a part, etc., is as true this century as last, and on the south of the equator as on the north; nor can climate, or position, or surroundings ever make true false, or false true.

Hence, to say that Christ came to establish the reign of truth, is the same thing as to say that He came to bind all men together in one and the same belief—in a word, to found a Church, wide as the world, coextensive with mankind, every member of which was to profess identically the same doctrine. Hence, according to the intention of God, every mind was to bow in humble acknowledgment of the same Divine faith.

To appreciate the gigantic difficulty of the task undertaken by Christ it will be useful to take a brief survey of the nature and character of men. Consider what an innate propensity there is to differ among themselves. What endless diversity of opinion exists upon every possible subject under heaven. What a countless multiplicity of views are constantly expressed in the press and in society upon every topic, from the greatest and most momentous down to the least and most trivial. For, though all men possess reason, yet

their reason being finite and extremely limited, the same truth seems to present itself to different minds in different ways, and none seem able to grasp any truth in its entirety. In this respect the mind's eye may be said to resemble in some measure the material eye. Things appear differently to the eye according to the difference of the point of view. The sun and moon appear to a spectator on earth to be about the same size, though one is many million times the bulk of the other; so, too, they appear to be pretty equally distant from the earth, although we know *aliunde* that while one is tens of millions of miles away, the other is but tens of thousands. So, again, an object which looks perfectly straight when lying on the dry ground, seems to be crooked and bent when half-immersed in the water. A similar remark may be made with regard to colours. When viewed by gaslight they appear to be of one tint, and of quite another when viewed by daylight. So, too, what is clearly seen by a man with normal sight will be obscure, or altogether invisible, to one who is short-sighted, and so on, and so on.

Now such strange diversities so often observable in the material world have their counterpart in the spiritual, moral and intellectual world. No observer can have lived for many years with men without being struck by this strange fact. Whether

it be due to difference of education; or of training, or of surroundings, or of habits of thought, men will see the self-same things in totally different lights.

Let me illustrate my meaning by one or two very common examples: A trial is about to take place. Twelve jurymen are summoned. They are men of mature age, of average ability, of fair education, and with a reputation for sound sense. In neither of the contending parties are they particularly interested. And, what is more, they honestly and conscientiously resolve to set aside all prejudice, personal feeling and bigotry, etc., and to be guided in their judgment simply and solely by the merits of the case as it is set before them. Yet, incredible as it may appear, it often turns out that even this handful of men cannot agree upon a verdict. Consider the whole circumstances carefully. All twelve jurors have assisted at the trial; all have carefully watched the proceedings from the opening of the case; all have listened to the pleadings of the counsel for the plaintiff and of the counsel for the defendant; all have gazed on the countenance of the judge, and heard his summing up and final instructions and remarks. Precisely the same words, sentences, intonations, looks and gestures have come under the notice of each of these twelve men. There is no information afforded to one



which is not afforded to all, and yet strange to say they cannot agree. Here is a clear proof that the same evidence affects some in one way and some in another. One juryman deems the prisoner innocent, another rests quite satisfied that he is guilty. One would pronounce the death sentence with perfect equanimity, the other would forthwith set the accused at liberty.

Here then we have a dozen men, of a like station in life, living in the same age, in the same city, and amid the same surroundings, unable to agree upon one definite point concerning which all have had the same evidence. If this be true, what chance, let me ask, in all fairness, would there be of getting *the entire world* to agree upon *any single article* of faith! And how immeasurably more impossible it would be, by mere argument, to persuade all men to agree upon the *whole summary* of truth, which goes to make up what we call Christian revelation! It would certainly be wholly impossible by any force of mere reasoning and argumentation.

Or, take a somewhat different example. Say politics. Here, within the single town of London, living side by side, are men of the most divergent views. Within a circumference of twelve miles we find that men of the same education, possessing the same information, with access to the same sources, who watch the course of events with the

same eagerness, and who read and study history with equal interest and avidity, draw the most opposite conclusions, and advocate the most opposite policy. They are Whigs or Tories, strict Conservatives, advanced Liberals, or violent Radicals. They denounce and condemn one another; and from platform and rostrum, openly declare, and probably sincerely believe, that their opponents are enemies of their country; that their policy is subversive of all order and prosperity; and that, if followed, will drive England to the dogs! Yet, while one reproaches the other in the bitterest terms, each may very easily be following his own deeply seated and honest convictions. And so it is with almost any question that may be suggested. Ask, *e. g.*, an Englishman, a Prussian and a Frenchman to give you the true historical account of the battle of Waterloo. What a contrast there will be in the three different pictures, though all are supposed to be painting the same scene! With what a partial hand will they apportion the blame and the praise, the shame and the glory of that memorable day! Or discuss with an Italian and a German the relative merits of Dante and Goethe. Ask which poet is really the greater. The German will give you twenty reasons for preferring Goethe; the Italian will discover or invent just as many for preferring Dante.

Men split up and divide upon every subject. If we set aside mathematical and axiomatical truths, we may safely say that there is hardly any one subject upon which they are absolutely agreed. On questions of music, painting and architecture; of history, literature and poetry, how extraordinarily man differs from man. Who will persuade all men to agree upon the best systems of government, the best methods of education, the best means of fortifying a city, attacking a square, razing a redoubt, or prosecuting a campaign, or, for the matter of that, even the best way of cooking an egg or boiling a potato? On almost every subject that can engage the mind of man there is disagreement, opposition and constant dissension. So much so, indeed, that *Quot homines tot sententiæ*; "as many men, so many judgments," has become a common proverb in every language.

Innumerable other examples might be given, but I think enough has been said to show how little men are disposed to agree, and how extremely difficult it is to find, I will not say any one race, or even any one nation, but any one country, town or city, in which all the inhabitants are united upon so much as a single point.

Some years ago a well-known London daily paper put to its contributors the question: "*Is marriage a failure?*" There were thousands of published replies, but all different. Every writer

modified and qualified his (or her) answer by conditions and considerations of his own. Another paper requested its contributors to amuse themselves and the public during the silly season by mentioning the ten most distinguished men in history, and collocating them in order of merit; and, of course, with a similar result. In fact, though God has conferred the gift of reason upon all, yet even in the same country, and in the same age, there will be found to exist many opposite and contradictory views on the most homely and familiar subjects.

Bearing this fact in mind, we shall be in a better position to estimate the enormous difficulty of the task undertaken by Jesus Christ. For what did He propose to do? To efface all differences in matters of supernatural faith, and to draw together in a bond of perfect religious unity, not one race or country, but all races and all countries; and not merely all men living in one period or century, but all races, tongues, nationalities and peoples who should ever be born, to the end of time. He resolved to make it practically possible to reduce to harmony the religious beliefs of hundreds of millions—or, if we include those still unborn, of millions of millions of men of every age, character, constitution, condition, education, race and colour, and to put them in a position to know and to accept the whole body of revealed

truths ; truths, be it observed, most difficult most abstruse, most unintelligible to mere reason, and wholly above the mind of the wisest man to unravel and explain ; such as the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist. Rich and poor, old and young, learned and ignorant, lords and labourers, masters and slaves, were to obtain eternal life by accepting the same revelation. The words are most clear and categorical : “ Whosoever believeth, shall be saved ; whosoever believeth not, shall be condemned.”

Yet what vast differences exist in the mental condition of different persons. Contrast the highly educated academician, fresh from the university, with the decrepit old street woman, whose thoughts scarce ever soar beyond her apple stall or steaming tray of roasted chestnuts ; or the simple lay brother ripening for heaven within the peaceful cloisters of some monastic retreat, with the soldier bold, ready for carnage, bloodshed and tumult, quick, testy and impatient for the fray, and with the rude blast of war blowing in his ears ; or, again, the old judge, slow, serious and solemn, pronouncing in muffled tones the sentence of death, with the country maiden, all blushes and smiles, dancing and coquetting with her companions on the village green. Marked, indeed, is the contrast ; yet these, and all others, from the



king upon his throne down to the king's humblest subject and meanest slave or bondsman, have to subscribe and to assent to the same dogmas and articles of faith.

Such contrasts as the above are to be met even within the walls of the same city, and are few and unimportant as compared to others that exist within the broader circumference of the world-wide Church. We are dealing, not with a city, but with the entire earth. Here we are confronted not only with different individuals, but with different tribes and peoples; peoples as far removed from one another in character and disposition as in latitude and longitude. On one side we have the highly cultured European, on the other the degraded Australian black; while between these two extremes innumerable different races and characters take their stand; *e. g.*, the woolly-headed negro, toiling in the sugar plantations beneath a scorching tropical sun; the undeveloped Esquimau, drinking train oil in the land of perpetual ice and snow; the Bedouin, traversing the sandy deserts of Arabia; the Chinaman, plucking the tender leaves in the sunny tea groves of his own country; the venturesome Venezuelan, fishing along the banks of the Orinoco; and the Neapolitan Lazzarone, sleeping and basking in the broiling sun.

Every man, woman and child throughout the

whole earth, even though separated from one another by habits, customs, traditions, language, occupation, interest and antecedents, is commanded to unite in professing the one true religion taught by Jesus Christ. As to our Lord's intention there can be no shadow of doubt. He came to teach the *whole* world, and to teach the truth; and truth is essentially *one*. He even prayed that this unity might always subsist. In the solemn hour preceding His bitter passion He addressed a prayer for unity to His Eternal Father: "Father, keep them in Thy name . . . that they may be one, as We also are one" (John xvii. 11). And again: "Not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in Me: that they *all* may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee" (John xvii. 21, 22). St. Paul, when writing to the Ephesians, refers to this fact in very remarkable words. Christ, he tells them, "Gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, *until we all meet into the unity of faith*, and of the knowledge of the Son of God," etc. (chap. iv. 11, 12); for there can be but *one faith*, just as there can be but one supreme Lord (Ep. iv. 5).

It is clear from reason, and from the explicit

teaching of Holy Scripture, that the Incarnate God desired unity of faith among men. He wished that all, in every place and in every age, should profess the same eternal truths; and He wished this sincerely and honestly, and imposed it upon mankind as a most serious obligation.

But it would be inconsistent, not only with the known goodness and benignity of God, but even with His wisdom and His justice, to command a unity so contrary to nature, so impossible to unaided reason, so difficult even to the best disposed, unless He at the same time provided some really easy and sufficient means of maintaining it. He who knows so well the clay of which we are formed, and the weakness and imbecility of our nature, would not, and in justice could not, expect or exact union, unless He established some simple, practical and efficient principle of union, easy to work and easy to apply.

This principle exists nowhere save in the Catholic Church, and is no other than the principle of Divine authority. The Church of God, which is spread throughout the world, is held together by an infallible Head. In all matters of doctrine and morals the millions of the faithful are dependent on their pastors and priests; the thousands of priests are dependent upon their bishops and archbishops; and the hundreds of bishops and archbishops are dependent on their

sovereign lord, the Pope. The Pope, as Vicar of God and Vicegerent of Christ upon earth, is the centre of a vast organism, which branches off in all directions as the spokes of a wheel branch off from the hub, and has its ramifications in every country, and extends to the farthest ends of the earth. As every one of the radii of a circle meets at and is connected with the centre, so every member of the Church is kept in touch with the centre of spiritual authority at Rome. Having thus connected every member of the Church through a series of ascending gradations to one Head, the only thing needed to secure and maintain perfect union of doctrine is the infallibility of that Head. The recognition of the Sovereign Pontiff's absolute immunity from all error in faith and morals when teaching the whole Church, "urbi et orbi," would ensure a perfect union throughout the whole body of the faithful. This God in His infinite wisdom promised, and in His infinite power secured. He imparted this stupendous gift first of all to St. Peter, and then in turn to all those destined to succeed him in the government of His Church. "Thou art *Peter*, and upon *this rock* I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," etc. (Matt. xvi. 18). And again: "I have prayed for thee that *thy faith* fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32).

The wisdom displayed in this wonderful contrivance is truly Divine. No one considering it can fail to be impressed. Indeed, one hardly knows which to admire more—its marvellous simplicity or its extraordinary efficacy. It is at once the most practical method of attaining the desired end, and the easiest to work, and reminds us of some of those beautiful contrivances in nature which fulfil a most complicated purpose by the simplest possible means.

Ten thousand streams, all of which are supplied from the same fountain-head, must all be the same ; so ten thousand peoples and races, all of which derive their doctrine from one infallible source, must ever profess the same doctrine, and thus enjoy perfect unity of belief.

So long as a man has humility enough to obey the authority of the Vicar of Christ, which is no other than that of Christ Himself ("who heareth you, heareth Me"), so long will he remain in the unity of faith. When disputes arise, when differences of opinion are expressed, no breach is formed, for the matter is referred to Rome, and the Pope decides the question, and puts an end to the dispute. For the disputant either accepts the decision or proudly resists. In the first hypothesis he remains a dutiful child of the Church, and in the second hypothesis the Church simply casts him out of her communion as a rebel. The



unhappy man may be a cause of scandal for a week, and of comment for a month; but a few years pass, he dies, and in a short time his very name is forgotten; while the Church moves gloriously on, invulnerable, immutable, the Bride of Christ, and the glory of her children.

At the present moment the Catholic Church, though spread throughout the entire world, remains ever one integral organic whole. And why is this? Because the self-same Divine voice that spoke through Peter in the council chamber of Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago, still speaks through Leo XIII. All Catholics recognise him as the mouthpiece of the infinite God, and when he pronounces a decree or defines a doctrine, two hundred and fifty millions of loyal subjects bow in cheerful, grateful obedience before him, and accept his ruling and his authority. He watches over the whole flock. He has been appointed pastor by Christ Himself. All are bound to listen to him as to Christ in person, and who despises him, despises Christ (Luke x. 16).

While others are tossed about on the pathless sea of error, and are carried hither and thither by every wind of doctrine, we are at peace. What a contrast between the Church and the sects! Who but the stone-blind can fail to distinguish the work of God from the work of man?

What is the bond of union among Protestants?

Where is their infallible authority? The Bible. But is the Bible, when left to each one's private interpretation, a principle of unity? History and experience prove it to be precisely the reverse. It is a most prolific principle of disunion, of discord and dissension. So soon as ever the principle was introduced, men split up into different sections, according to the different interpretations they gave to the various passages. And when they differed among themselves, who was to settle their disputes and to adjust their difficulties? Who was to preserve unity? There was no one. They recognised no living infallible voice. Each felt himself to be as good a judge as his neighbour. What was the result? Chaos! In a word, endless divisions, and the formation of a heterogeneous assembly of persons known by the extraordinary name<sup>1</sup> of Protestants, not really united in one organic whole, but each following his own glimmering light—constituting an assemblage to which courtesy extends the name of Church, but which is about as much like the Church of God as a heap of loose stones is like a cathedral.

But more of this in the next chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Webster defines a *Protestant*—"a Christian who protests against the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church". Can one conceive any form of religion more inane, empty and unattractive than one which is based and founded upon protests!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.

“In order to know the religion of Protestants,” says Chillingworth, “neither the doctrine of Luther, nor that of Calvin or Melancthon is to be taken, nor the Confession of Augsburg or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Anglican Church, nor even the harmony of all the Protestant confessions, but that which they all subscribe to, as the perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is to say, the Bible. Yes, the Bible, THE BIBLE ALONE IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.”—*Vide The Religion of Protestants, a sure road to Salvation*, by Dr. CHILLINGWORTH (ch. vi., 56).

**I**F we turn to *Whitaker's Almanack* for 1899 we shall find that he enumerates two hundred and seventy-four “Religious Denominations” in England alone. In the United States of America there is said to be almost an equal number, so that we can hardly be accused of exaggeration if we say that, throughout the English-speaking world, there are many hundred distinct bodies of Christians.

Here we seem, at first sight, to be confronted with a veritable sea of confusion, and to be listening to a perfect babel of conflicting tongues. There seems no way of classifying these hundreds of different churches. They refuse to group themselves in any regular order. Each is a law to itself. The outlines of each are so indistinct, and so vague and ill-defined, that they seem to blend almost imperceptibly into one another like

the floating clouds in a storm-swept sky. Looking, however, somewhat closer, we find that there is one among these Christian Churches which is fundamentally different from all the rest. Different, in the first place, in the number of its adherents. Not merely in the sense of being larger and more extended and more universally diffused than any other, which would not be very remarkable, but in the sense of being so *immeasurably* greater as to exceed numerically, not only any single Christian Church taken alone, but all other Christian Churches put together. So that, if we divide all Christian Churches into two parts, and place the Roman Catholic Church upon one side, and all the other forms of Christianity on the other, we shall find a larger number gathered together under the banner of the Catholic Church than under the host of distinct banners held aloft by all the varieties of conflicting sects. That is perhaps the most obvious distinction, lying, as it were, on the surface, and the first to attract the notice of the casual observer.

But there is another and far more important distinction, which takes us at once to the root of the matter, and that consists in the difference of the rule of faith. The hundreds of different Christian denominations may, and do, differ to an extraordinary extent among themselves. They vary in innumerable unimportant, and in a considerable

number of important, points, both of doctrine and of discipline. Yet, however widely they may differ upon other points, they all, or almost all, are agreed as to their rule of faith. They all accept Reason and the Scriptures; or, if you will, the Scriptures, interpreted by reason, as the source and very foundation of their respective creeds. They one and all point to the Holy Scriptures as to the infallible and unerring word of God. They accept no other infallible or unerring authority upon earth. The Bible is the Divine Book, and contains all that is necessary to salvation; and there is no other Divine authority, no other infallible guide or teacher to whom men can have access. Though each denomination is distinct, and unlike every other, yet one and all found their creed on this only infallible teacher, *viz.*, the Bible. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation;" and "Whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man," etc. So runs Article VI. of the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> "Protestants assert that the Old and New Testaments are the only safe source of religious knowledge and form the *sole rule of faith.*"<sup>2</sup>

It is only when we turn to the gigantic Catholic

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Thirty-nine Articles.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide History of Civilisation in Scotland*, by Jn. Mackintosh, vol. ii., p. 35.



Church, which stretches her arms over the entire earth, that we discover a totally different rule of faith. The Catholic Church accepts reason, just as the Protestant Church does. It is in her eyes a gift of God, to be exercised and employed to the utmost; she also accepts the Holy Scriptures as the inspired word of God, and as containing a Divine revelation. She even pays them more honour and more respect, and treats them with even greater reverence than any of those Churches that profess to found their creed on them alone. So far, she and all other Christian bodies are at one. But here she parts company with them. She does *not* believe that God has left this inspired Book to the mercy of fallible men to be turned and twisted into a thousand conflicting meanings, to be made to support doctrines and practices not only different, but opposite; and to be a basis upon which hundreds of distinct and irreconcilable sects may take their stand. She believes that God confided this inspired volume to the guardianship of a living and infallible Church. That this Church is the only authorised interpreter and explainer of its pages. That no passage can really bear two or more *contradictory* senses; and that where such contradictory interpretations are set forth, it rests with her, and with her alone, to decide absolutely, definitely and with unwavering certainty which is, and which is not, the true in-

terpretation; and so to secure unity or truth, which is the same thing; for where there is truth, there unity must always be found also.

There are, in fact, but two systems of Christianity possible—the one based on private judgment, and the other on authority. The system of private judgment is by far the more flattering to human pride, and that is why it has commended itself to so many haughty and rebellious spirits. It makes each man, not a disciple, but a master; not a learner, but a teacher; not a pupil, but a critic. But, as a consequence, it renders all real unity, not only difficult, but practically impossible. Now, unless we are out and out rationalists, and deny that there is infallibility anywhere, which would be to destroy supernatural religion altogether, I take it as evident that but two courses are open to us: either we must accept the Bible as the only infallible teacher, or we must accept the *magisterium* of the living and articulate Church as equally infallible. If the infallible Bible alone will not suffice, we are driven to acknowledge an infallible Church. Now our reasons for not accepting the “Bible and the Bible only” theory, are manifold. In the space at my disposal I can suggest only a few of the more important:—

Firstly. Christ, when founding His kingdom on earth, never wrote as much as a single line of any kind, which seems strange if He intended each

man's religion to depend upon his personal interpretation of certain documents.

Secondly. Though He commanded His disciples to "Go and *teach* all nations," to "*preach* to every living creature," He never once commanded any one of them to commit a word to paper or parchment.

Thirdly. Even the very expressions He made use of seem to emphasise this fact; for He does not say: "If any man will not *read the Scriptures*," but, "If any man will not *hear the Church*, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican"; not "He that follows the *Scriptures* as his guide, follows Me," but rather, "He that *heareth you*, heareth Me". And, again, "Faith cometh (*not by reading*, but) *by hearing*"; and so on, in many other passages.

Fourthly. Because (*a*) very few of the Apostles wrote at all. Out of the "twelve," only five wrote any portion of the Bible, *viz.*, St. Matthew, St. John, St. Peter, St. Jude and St. James; and (*b*) because those who did put pen to paper were urged to do so from special circumstances, as when absent, or in prison, and from accidental motives; and (*c*) even then, they did not address their writings to the whole Church, but to some one or another section specially needing them, or to some local church, and occasionally even to mere

individuals, as is the case in the Epistles to Titus, to Timothy and to Philemon, etc.

Fifthly. Because the very form and construction of the Scriptures seem to show that the Bible was never intended to be a text-book of doctrine, or a summary of belief. There is no clear or methodical statement of the teaching of Christ, proceeding in regular sequence, but exhortations, narratives and incidents, etc., are all intermingled.

Sixthly. Because the entire Bible was not even written until whole generations of Christians had passed away; *e.g.*, the Gospel and Apocalypse of St. John had no existence for more than sixty years after our Lord's ascension.

Seventhly. Because even after the various books of Scripture had been composed, they were not at once gathered together into one volume. Some were to be found in one place, some in another, and it was not until hundreds of years had rolled slowly by that the various inspired writings were collected and placed under the same cover; so that during many generations scarcely any one could have even seen the complete collection, unless indeed he were a great traveller.

Eighthly. Because even when at last the whole of the inspired writings had been collected into one volume, not one person in a thousand could have got possession of them. There was no printing; and even paper had not yet been invented,

so that the only possible means of securing a copy of this volume (in which each man is supposed to find his religion) was to get it written out by hand, letter by letter, and word by word; a process which would, according to some authorities, take a scribe five years to accomplish. Nor was this all: the copy had to be written on vellum or parchment. As a consequence, the price was enormous and prohibitive. No one but a rich man could afford to purchase such a thing. So that for fourteen hundred years the system of "the Bible and the Bible only," interpreted by each individual, would seem to be an impossible one, and, if impossible, then to be rejected by every reasonable and reflecting man. As the well-known Anglican historian, W. Lecky, observes: "Protestantism *could not possibly have existed* without a general diffusion of the Bible, and that diffusion was impossible until after the two inventions of paper and printing".<sup>1</sup> Clearly a religion dependent for its very existence upon such human inventions, unknown during fourteen centuries of Christianity, cannot be the religion of Christ.

Ninthly. There was not only the difficulty of procuring a copy of the Scriptures, there was the yet greater difficulty of reading them. The Protestant historian, Macaulay, tells us that: "There was then throughout the greater part of Europe

<sup>1</sup> *Rationalism in Europe*, vol. ii., p. 209.



very little knowledge, and that little was confined to the clergy. Not one man in five hundred," he says, "could have spelled his way through a psalm; books were few and costly: the art of printing was unknown." "Probably," writes a professor of the University of Laval, Abbé Bégin, "there is no exaggeration in saying that nine-tenths of the population were not in a position to read the manuscript of the Bible. According to the Protestant system we should have to conclude, therefore, that these poor unfortunate beings had no rule of faith, and were out of the path of salvation."

Tenthly. Because, whereas we *know*, on the one hand, that Christ desired and prayed for unity of faith and doctrine among His disciples, we know, on the other hand, that the "Bible only" system has been the direct cause of interminable divisions and innumerable dissensions. In the words of the Anglican historian, Lecky:<sup>1</sup> "It has been most abundantly proved that from Scripture *honest* and *able* men have derived, and do derive arguments in support of the most opposite opinions".<sup>2</sup> And if this be true in the case of honest and able men, what will be the result in the case

<sup>1</sup> On 2nd November, 1895, Mr. Lecky wrote: "I was brought up in the Church of England, and have never severed myself from it."—*Vide St. James's Gazette*, 14th November, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Rationalism in Europe*, vol. ii., p. 174.

of the less honest and the less able? In our eyes such a system stands self-condemned.

The above facts present themselves as insuperable difficulties against the Protestant rule of faith. But there remain others far greater still. There are three fundamental tenets which are absolutely essential to the Protestant theory, but which on strict Protestant principles we hold to be absolutely unproved and unprovable. Let me exemplify them in this way: A Protestant comes up to me, holding the Bible in his hand. He says: "This is the word of God; this the foundation of my faith. I don't want any infallible Church to teach me. All I need lies here, within the cover of this book." Thus Dean Farrar is reported to have said: "We take our stand on the open Bible, and declare it to be the very charter of our existence". What would we naturally reply? We would say: "Not so fast, my friend. Are you *quite sure* that you hold in your hand the true Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible?"

I. Take the most important part of it, *viz.*, the New Testament. Consider its history. It was written by different men, at different times, in different places, under different circumstances. The different Gospels and Epistles composing it were floating about in different parts of the Church, together with dozens and scores of other Epistles

and Gospels,<sup>1</sup> and it was not till the fourth century that the Catholic Church, after carefully examining them one by one, said: "This is Scripture;" "that is not Scripture": "this we enrol in the canon;" "that we reject". For example, there was a Gospel written by one of the twelve Apostles, *viz.*, St. Bartholomew.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic Church said: We reject that, even though the writer *was an Apostle*; on the other hand, there was a Gospel written by St. Luke, who was *not an Apostle*, and the Church said: We accept that even though the writer was not an Apostle.

In this way the present Bible came into existence. Now, either the Church which made the selection is infallible, or she is not infallible. If you say she is infallible, then you are bound to listen to her, and to obey her, and you must become a member of the Catholic Church, which is the only Church which has ever even so much as put forward the claim; but if you say she is fallible, then you acknowledge that she may err; and if she may err, then she may have erred in her selection of the books of Scripture, and you have no certainty that you possess the Holy Bible at all!

<sup>1</sup> Note, for instance, the Protevangelion, the Gospel according to St. Thomas, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Epistles of St. Clement, of St. Barnabas, the Books of Ihermas, the Acts of St. Andrew, and a great many others, which the Church has refused to insert in the Canon of Scripture.

<sup>2</sup> The Gospel according to St. Bartholomew is mentioned by St. Jerome.

Some of the books you include may be mere human documents—as, on the other hand, some of the really inspired books may have been omitted. Different Protestant denominations have different Bibles.

Luther rejected from the Canon of the Scriptures Job, Ecclesiastes, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, and the Second and Third of St. John, that of St. Jude, and the Apocalypse (or Revelations). Calvin rejected Esther, Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus and Maccabees. Spinoza doubts the authenticity of the Pentateuch, Judges, Kings, etc.; Strauss, the Gospel of St. Matthew; Griesbach, the Gospel of St. Mark. Who will decide between these, and countless others, if there be no infallible court of appeal, no unerring voice to pronounce sentence? No! If there be no infallible Church to settle such questions, no one can declare with any certainty that he possesses the Scriptures at all. Even were one satisfied with human testimony, it would not help one, for human testimony is not agreed on the point.

II. A second difficulty arises concerning the question of inspiration. What proof can any one bring forward that the Bible (granted that we have the Bible) contains the whole inspired word of God, and nothing but the inspired word of God? Inspiration is not a thing that can be proved by

mere history or intrinsic evidence. Whether the Holy Ghost Himself has guided and guarded a writer and protected him from all error, etc., can be known only by an appeal to authority. It does not admit of ordinary direct proof, or of ocular demonstration. So that, unless the authority appealed to be an infallible one, a man cannot be absolutely sure that the Scriptures are inspired. No such authority can be found outside the Catholic Church. There is not even agreement among the various Protestant denominations upon this most important, and in their case, positively essential, point.

III. But the third difficulty is the most insuperable of all, and that is the difficulty of interpretation. The Bible, however holy a book, and however certainly inspired, is not merely useless, but worse than useless to one who draws from it doctrines and principles which are contrary to its real teaching. Yet this is inevitable, unless there be a Divinely assisted, and consequently an infallible interpreter. Some would persuade us that the Bible is an easy and simple book to understand; so easy, in fact, that "he who runs may read". Nothing could be further from the truth. This may be proved from the Scriptures themselves. Thus the Eunuch of the Queen of Ethiopia, who was studying the writings of the prophet Isaias as he journeyed home, admitted to the Deacon Philip



that he could not understand the sense of what he read, unless some one explained it to him. After reading out some prophetic utterances, he turned to Philip and said: "I beseech thee, of whom doth the prophet speak this? of himself, or of some other man?" (see Acts viii. 27-35). The Eunuch himself was unable to decide.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel (verse 25 *et seq.*) we have another illustration of the difficulty of correctly interpreting the inspired text. Our Lord is obliged to interpret, to His own disciples on their way to Emmaus, "the things concerning Himself, beginning from Moses and from all the prophets". He told them that they had not understood, and therefore He "opened to them the Scriptures"—ὡς διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς. St. Peter, inspired by the Holy Ghost, reveals to us still more clearly that there are "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures (ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς), to their own destruction" (2 Peter iii. 16).

The truth of this contention is fully borne out by the experience of past and present ages. One person reads the Divine oracles in one way, and another in another, so that from one and the same infallible source are derived totally distinct and opposite doctrines. The followers of Novatian take one view, and the followers of Sabellius

another ; while Donatists, Arians, Pelagians and Nestorians all differ among themselves. Truly does Erasmus remark that “the interpretation of the Scriptures by individual minds has never ended in anything but laming texts, which walked perfectly straight before” ; while St. Augustine, as early as the fifth century, declared: “non aliunde natae sunt hærases, nisi dum Scripturæ bonæ intelliguntur non bene”. Butler reminds us how—

Religion spawn'd a various rout  
Of petulent capricious sects  
The maggots of corrupted texts.

Some Protestants to whom the objection has been put have attempted to meet it by saying: “This may be true with careless and worldly minded men, but if a devout Christian takes up the Bible with reverence, places himself in the presence of God, and earnestly prays for the assistance and light of the Holy Spirit, he will be sure to arrive at a correct and true meaning, so that he has nothing to fear”. Well! We English are considered a practical people. We like to test the theory for ourselves ; for to use a homely phrase, “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”. Then let us, for the moment, accept the theory, just to see how it works. Take three honourable, good and learned men ; *e. g.* (1) the Anglican Bishop of Lincoln, Dr. King ; (2) the Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Ryle ;

and (3) the Rev. Dr. Martinau, a representative of Unitarianism. Each believes in the Bible. Each, no doubt, approaches the study of it in becoming dispositions. Each craves God's grace, and light, and assistance. Yet each rises from his knees holding a totally different, and wholly irreconcilable doctrine. The Protestant Bishop of Lincoln finds authority in Scripture for a sacrificing priesthood, for priestly absolution, and for the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The Protestant Bishop of Liverpool, on the other hand, can discover nothing of the kind. On the contrary, he finds, that any clergyman who attempts or pretends to forgive sins is usurping the authority of Christ; further, he fails to discover any reason for believing that Christ is truly present under the sacramental species. "This is My Body" means one thing to the Protestant Bishop of Lincoln, and quite another to the Protestant Bishop of Liverpool. Still both are able to find in the Bible the Divinity of Christ. But a Unitarian, as clever and as sincere as any Anglican prelate, takes up the inspired writings, and he can find no proof within its pages even that Christ is God! He prays, and studies and reads the Bible, and then comes to the conclusion that Christ is not God at all. You urge that the Scripture speaks of Christ as "God," and as the "Son of God". He will reply: "Yes, but may not such words be applied to a mere man?"

Does not the psalmist say, 'Ye are *all* gods, and sons of the Most High'?" If you return to the charge, and point out that Christ's Divinity is clearly contained in His own declaration, "I and the Father are one," he will again retort: "Not at all; that is merely a union of heart and will such as exists, or may exist, among men. Nay, this is [he will say] evident from Christ's prayer—'Father, that *they* may be one, *even as I and Thou art one*.'" This is a fair specimen of the absurd and senseless position to which the private interpretation of the Bible inevitably leads. Here are three well-known, highly-respected, learned and scholarly men each discovering a totally different doctrine in the self-same words.

Is the Holy Ghost directing them all? Is the Changeless, Eternal and Uncreated Truth whispering "yes" in the ears of one; and "no" into the ears of another; and declaring that a thing is false and true, black and white, at one and the same time? To say so would be blasphemous. If, instead of three highly educated and distinguished men, of recognised ability, we take the millions of educated and uneducated, learned and unlearned, young and old, rich and poor, the effect of such a system becomes still more apparent, and its consequences still more hopelessly absurd and appalling.

To sum up: 1. We believe that Christ came

upon earth to teach the truth. This, indeed, is stated in the most emphatic way by Christ Himself in the hall of Pilate, *viz.*: "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the *truth*" (John xviii. 37). We believe with St. Paul that "the Church is the pillar and ground of truth"; that the Holy Spirit is to "remain with her for ever to teach her all truth"; and that "the gates of hell (*i. e.*, of error) shall never prevail".

2. We believe truth to be one, and that it cannot be anything but one, and in harmony with itself. We hold that two churches, teaching contradictory doctrines, may both possibly be false, but by no possibility can both be true. That they may both be true we regard as a metaphysical impossibility, a self-evident absurdity. But if instead of two, there be five or six hundred claiming to be true Churches of Christ, the absurdity becomes more glaring and monstrous.

3. That there can be but one true Church follows, not merely from the intrinsic nature of truth itself, but also from the repeated and express declaration of the Divine Founder of Christianity, *e. g.*, "There shall be *one* fold or flock, and one Shepherd" (John x. 16). "Be ye all *one* Body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, *one* faith, one baptism" (Eph. iv. 4, 5). "You are the body of Christ, and



members one of another," and so forth. Further, the very comparisons our Lord makes use of prove the same truth. He likens His Church to (*a*) a Kingdom, (*b*) a City, (*c*) a House, (*d*) a Family, (*e*) a Fold or Flock, (*f*) a Tree, (*g*) a Body, etc. All these figures imply a most essential unity, together with diversity. What is more various than the different parts of a living body? Yet what is more essentially one, and in harmony with itself?

4. If unity be essential and vitally important, what constitutes the bond of unity? "The Bible," cry out the Protestant Churches. "The living and imperishable voice of the Divinely assisted, and (*because* Divinely assisted) infallible Church," exclaim Catholics. The one system maintains true unity in a community of two hundred and fifty or three hundred millions, consisting of men of every race and nation, and character and disposition, and language under heaven. The other system cannot secure unity, even within a national Church, among men of the same race and country, and of the same general character and antecedents—nay, cannot secure unity upon the most vital points of Christian doctrine either among the people, or the clergy, or even among the bishops themselves.

There is no logical resting-place between Catholicism and Rationalism.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THEOLOGY AND VIVISECTION.<sup>1</sup>

“There is in the whole world no cruelty more cruel than ignorance, and it is this cruel ignorance which we, by experiment, seek to dispel.”—Sir WILLIAM GULL.

“The results of experiments on living animals have been of *inestimable service* to man, and to the lower animals, and the continuance and extension of such investigations is *essential* to the progress of knowledge, the relief of suffering, and the saving of life.”—The recorded opinion of the General Meeting of the British Medical Association, 1892.

“The law of sacrifice is the law of life, which no one can escape; and, provided it is conducted with reverence, of necessity, and under supervision, I regard *experimental research* not as a mere privilege, but as a moral duty.”—Sir ANDREW CLARK.

“Experiments on living animals are as necessary to the further progress of medical science and the healing art, as are experiments in test-tubes to the advancement of chemistry, theoretical and applied.”—Sir JAMES CRICHTON BROWNE.

**G**OD alone is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of all things (Apoc. i. 8).

In creating He neither did nor could propose to Himself any supreme end other than His

<sup>1</sup> The *Dublin Review*, in its notice of the preceding edition of the present work, pronounces judgment on this chapter in the following words: “The chapter on vivisection is so eminently sensible and convincing that it will probably serve to reassure completely all except those hopelessly bigoted and fanatical extremists who put the sufferings of a few animals above the common good of the human race. *For such, no argument is possible*; but there are many others who love animals, who shrink naturally and rightly from the idea of inflicting pain upon them, and will therefore *be thankful to Monsignor Vaughan for showing them so clearly the rights and wrongs of the question from a Christian and Catholic point of view*” (*vide D. R.*, Jan., 1898, p. 206).

own honour and glory. "The Lord hath made all things for himself: the wicked also for the evil day" (Prov. xvi. 4). Although God created whatever exists for His own glory, yet he ordered all things "in measure and number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 21), and so disposed them that the lower subserves the higher,<sup>1</sup> according to a regular and beautiful plan, in such wise that the entire visible creation is linked together like a chain, culminating at last in man himself, whom God has set over all His works, and whose intellect and free will enable him, in obedience to the Divine command, to rule over irrational nature.

Thus the rude, inorganic earth, the structureless rock and soil, and water and air, sustain, and indeed were made for the express purpose of sustaining, every form of vegetable life, from the most delicate filament of microscopic moss and lichen, invisible to the naked eye, right up through the various genera and species, to the vast primeval forests spreading over entire continents. The whole vegetable world, in its turn, is so ordered by the wisdom of God as to support, nourish, shelter and protect every variety of sentient being, from the mouse to the mammoth, and from the

<sup>1</sup> "Creaturæ ignobiliores sunt propter nobiliores; sicut creaturæ, quæ sunt infra hominem, sunt propter hominem. . . . Uterius, autem, totum universum cum singulis suis partibus ordinatur in Deum, sicut in finem" (pp. q. lxx., a. ii., ad c. *Sum.*; St. Thomas, p. 425, vol. i.).

tinest creeping or swimming animalcule to the most gigantic sea or land monster that the world contains. Finally, the whole earth,<sup>1</sup> organic and inorganic, vegetable and animal, is made for the rational use and benefit of man. "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast *set him over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet*, all sheep and oxen; moreover, also the beasts of the fields, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea that pass through the paths of the sea" (Ps. viii. 6-9).

Though all things were made for man, yet not all administer to his needs in the same way, or in the same degree. Some creatures serve him *directly*: as the air he breathes; the stones composing the walls of the houses he dwells in, and protecting him from the wind and rain; the cattle and sheep he feeds upon; and the horse and mule that carry his burdens, and share his fatigues. Other creatures serve him *indirectly*, by serving those that serve him: as the grass that nourishes his sheep and cattle; or the deep sea that provides a home for the fish that furnish him with

<sup>1</sup> Some have objected that the whole earth cannot have been made for man, because he cannot utilise and put into requisition every part of it. But as well say that a high road is not made for man because his feet do not cover every inch of its surface; or that a school feast is not made for the children because they cannot eat *all* the cakes, nor drink *all* the tea and lemonade.

food, or that in other ways supply his wants. The umbrageous forests, where no human foot had ever trod, and which slowly grew throughout unheeded centuries, long before man's creation, were, nevertheless, destined to serve him in due time. Their gradual growth and slow decay, repeated again and again, through unmeasured ages, have formed the vast mines of precious fuel, the great coal measures, from which we now extract material for our fires. Nor is this dominion of man over all the visible world around him a usurpation. On the contrary, it is at God's express command that he lords it over the whole earth.

"Fill the earth," was the command of the Supreme and indisputable Lord of all things, "and *subdue* it, and *rule over* the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and *all living creatures* that move upon the earth" (Gen. i. 28). There is no disputing the force or meaning of this passage. Nor was this command intended to apply to man merely in his state of innocence;<sup>1</sup> for, speaking somewhat later to Noe and his sons, when the Deluge had destroyed the rest of the human race, He repeats the command in a still more emphatic manner. "Let the fear and dread of you," spoke

<sup>1</sup> "Post peccatum mansit in homine integrum dominium in animalia quoad jus et potestatem; convenit enim homini eo ipso quod est animal *ratione* præditum; sed quoad usum magna ex parte diminutum est, cum et paucis illud imponere possit et non nisi cum labore et difficultate" (I<sup>a</sup>. q. xcvi., a. i., ad. 4<sup>um</sup>, St. Thomas).



the Infinite God," be upon all the beasts of the earth, and upon all the fowls of the air, and all that move upon the earth. *All the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand. And everything that moveth and liveth shall be meat for you*" (Gen. ix. 2, 3).

That God has absolute dominion over all the works of His hands is as certain as that God exists. But it is equally certain from the above texts, not only that He could, but that He actually did, give man a right and an authority over every irrational creature that is to be found in this world. It is, of course, to this simple fact the inspired writer refers in Psalm cxiii. 16: "The heaven of heaven is the Lord's; but *the earth He has given to the children of men*". The "earth" includes not merely the lifeless material that constitutes its chief bulk, but all that it contains—fruits, vegetables, beasts, birds, fish, insects, etc. It is put, in a word, in antithesis, and contrasted with the "heaven of heaven," which certainly does not mean the mere vacant place, irrespective of its celestial inhabitants. St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (iii. 22), distinctly repeats and adds emphasis to the same truth when he writes: "All things are yours". St. Thomas thus interprets these words: "*Id est vestræ utilitati deservientia*"—"That is, for your use and benefit". In the lesson which he draws from this passage we find a

further confirmation of this doctrine: "Sicut homo non gloriatur de rebus sibi subjectis, ita et vos gloriari non debetis de rebus hujus mundi, *quæ omnia sunt vobis data a Deo*, secundum illud (Ps. viii.) '*omnia subjecisti sub pedibus ejus*'".

That there may be no mistake as to the teaching of St. Thomas upon this point we will quote the *Summa* itself. There it is laid down: "Creaturis irrationalibus bonum vel malum dicitur contingere in ordine ad creaturam rationalem, *propter quam sunt*. Ordinantur ad eam multipliciter; uno quidem modo per modum subventionis, in quantum scilicet ex creaturis irrationalibus subvenitur humanæ necessitati," etc. (2. 2. q. lxxvi., a 2, ad c). He here states that the irrational creatures are made on account of man ("propter quam sunt"; *i. e.*, "*for whose sake they exist*"), and that they are intended to serve him in various ways.<sup>1</sup> When, therefore, man makes use of creatures, and exercises the dominion over them that God has given him, he is acting justly, and honestly, and no one has any business to find fault with him for so doing. Man may, consequently, rightly consult his own

<sup>1</sup> The well-known Jesuit theologian, Lessius, makes an interesting observation in this connection: "Homo naturaliter est dominus omnium rerum inferiorum; ergo potest eas in suum usum convertere. Confirmatur; quia non potest homo ali elementis simplicibus, ut terra, aqua, etc., ergo compositis, qualia sunt animalia et plantæ, quæ sine anima non possunt conservari, sed mox corrumpuntur: unde *anima est ipsis data instar salis conservantis a putredine* (ut recte dixit Philo) *ut homo possit illis uti, cum libuerit*" (*De Jure*, etc., I, 2, ch. ix.).

convenience and advantage rather than the well-being and comfort of the lower animals, over whom God Himself has set him. We may select an illustration of this fact from the inspired word of God. Turning to the book of Tobias we find his God-appointed guide and instructor, who was no mere erring man, but the glorious Archangel Raphael, actually giving him an object-lesson in this very doctrine.

While standing with his feet in the river Tigris the youth Tobias beheld a large fish approaching him, upon which he cried out to the Archangel: "Sir, he cometh upon me". His heavenly guide replied: "Take him by the gill, and draw him to thee. And when he had done so, he stretched him out upon the land, and he began to pant before his feet." Such is the Scriptural narrative. Here then we have a creature violently withdrawn by the gill from his natural element, and panting on the ground in an agony of suffocation. And what says the angel? Does he call it cruelty, and bid his pupil cast the suffering monster back into his native stream? Quite the contrary. "The angel said to him: take out the entrails of this fish, and lay up his heart, and his gall, and his liver for thee: for these are necessary for useful medicines" (Tob. vi. 5). In plain truth, the beast had to endure a very appreciable degree of suffering, and to surrender not merely his liberty, but

even his life for the mere temporal advantage of man. The great principle underlying the above teaching of Scripture and theology may be thus formulated. God has given man dominion over the whole irrational creation. Therefore, in enforcing his rights he may, in so far as it is necessary, allow beasts to suffer pain and inconvenience. The preceding remarks refer, of course, to man's relation towards irrational though sensitive creatures in general. The special purpose of this paper, however, is to consider the much-debated question of vivisection,<sup>1</sup> about which a vast deal of nonsense is written, and a vast deal of unnecessary acrimony and abuse is expended.

We must begin, however, by anticipating a very common and specious objection. How is it possible that any verdict upon the point can be gathered—it is objected—from the great theologians, considering that vivisection is a thing of modern date, and could never have come under their notice, nor have commanded their attention? Now, as a matter of fact, vivisection “has been practised since the dawn of history, and flourished

<sup>1</sup> Vivisection strictly includes only cutting operations; but the term is extended to any physiological experimentation upon living animals, as compression of parts by ligatures, subjection of the creature to special conditions of atmospheric pressure, temperature and food, exhibition of poisons or other drugs, inoculation of disease, etc.—*Vide Century Dictionary.*

extensively all through the Middle Ages".<sup>1</sup> This at once disposes of the objection. But, since it is quite obvious that it was never practised in the precise manner, nor on the same scale as obtains at the present day, we will, for the sake of argument, allow the objection to remain, and give our answer.

Vivisection, as such, is evidently nothing more than a mode of action. It can neither create nor can it evolve new principles of morality, for the simple reason that principles are eternal and rooted in the very nature of things. At most, vivisection can but present itself as a new case which falls under the application of moral principles already in existence. Now, all these principles have met with a full and exhaustive treatment at the hands of the schoolmen. Of course, it is as clear as noonday that the ancient theologians could not have anticipated modern progress in *medicine* by treating explicitly of the actual case of vivisection, any more than they could have anticipated the results of modern progress in *acoustics* by discussing the validity of

<sup>1</sup> "A toutes les époques, on a pratiqué des vivisections. On raconte que les rois de Perse livraient les condamnés à mort aux médecins, afin qu'ils fissent sur eux des vivisections utiles à la médecine. Selon Galien, Attale III. Philométor, qui régnait 137 ans av. J. C. à Pergame, expérimentait les poisons et les contre-poisons sur des criminels condamnés à mort. . . On peut considérer Galien comme le fondateur des vivisections sur les animaux."—*Vide* Pierre Larousse. Tome 15.



a confession heard, or of an absolution conferred, through the telephone. Such applications are, as they would have termed it, *in infima specie*; and their solution, and that of others as well, is to be sought and found in the ordinary and acknowledged determining principles of which the schoolmen have bequeathed us a most searching and careful statement. It would, indeed, be difficult to discover any vital consideration which enters into the question of vivisection, of which the principles of solution are not to be found in the *Summa* of the great St. Thomas, either where he treats of the vice of cruelty, or where he speaks of animals and their place and use in the economy of creation.

The objection founded upon the modernness of the practice of vivisection—even supposing it to be quite modern, which we have seen it is not—is utterly baseless and imaginary. One might as well argue that a newly discovered metal would not fall under the ordinary rules of gravitation, as that a new case of conscience could not be disposed of by an application of the ordinary principles of morality.

In vivisection man inflicts a certain amount of pain upon the beasts, not indeed for the sake of causing pain, which *ex hypothesi* he regrets, but solely for the sake of some advantage or some gain to himself or to his fellow-man. Now the

question arises—Is this lawful or not? Here, I take it, lies the whole kernel of the matter, so we must put the point as clearly as we can, and as logically. Thus, of two things, one. Either it is lawful for man to inflict pain upon beasts for his own advantage and profit, or it is not. To cause such an amount of pain as is unavoidable for the obtaining of the end he has in view is evidently either a sin or not a sin. There is no middle term; it must necessarily be one or the other. Take the first alternative. Say it is a sin. Very well. Then it necessarily follows that to drive a horse in a cab; or to imprison a thrush in a cage; or to hunt the fox or the hare; or to put a worm on a fish-hook; or to add a butterfly to a collection, and thousands of similar common practices, are all actual sins. And if sins, then not to be committed for any consideration whatsoever—no! Not even to save a thousand worlds could one dig one's spurs into a horse's flanks, or chain up a dog in one's backyard, or spit a worm upon a hook. This is the absurdity to which the one alternative binds us.

Then let us assume the other, and only remaining alternative, and grant that none of the foregoing practices are sins. What then? To concede so much is to evacuate one's position altogether. It is to establish the important and far-reaching principle that beasts may be made to suffer, at

least in so far as it may be necessary or conducive to the well-being of man, for whose use and rational service they have been made; or, as St. Thomas expresses it, "propter quam sunt".<sup>1</sup>

Now, observe the *degree* of suffering inflicted does not enter into the essence of the matter at all. Whether the pain be greater or less cannot affect the principle one jot. The theological axiom, "magis et minus non variant speciem," is as true and as universally admitted among theologians as the geometrical axiom, "the part can never equal the whole," is among mathematicians. Thus the whole matter at once reduces itself to a question of adjustment and proportion. For the sake of a trifling gain, but a moderate degree of pain may reasonably be inflicted. But, as the importance of the end to be obtained increases, so may the amount of pain that is inflicted increase.

Thus, merely for the pleasure and recreation of a spin through the open country, I may harness my horse, and compel him, *nolens volens*, to drag

<sup>1</sup> Consult also: "*Omnia subjecti sub pedibus ejus, scilicet hominis. Est homini rerum exteriorum aliqua naturalis possessio, quantum ad usum, quo ipsis secundum rationem et voluntatem uti potest ad suum commodum et utilitatem. . . . Hoc autem naturale dominium super ceteras creaturas, quod competit homini secundum rationem, in qua imago Dei consistit, manifestatur in ipsa hominis creatione (Gen. i. 26), ubi dicitur: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram; et præsit piscibus maris, etc. (2<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>ae</sup> q. lxvi., a. 1., ad. c., p. 386).*" N. B.—Dominium, apud jurisconsultos definitur, "jus vel facultas re propria utendi ad quemlibet usum lege permissum, idque in commodum proprium".

my carriage over hill and down-dale, and to turn now to the right, and now to the left, as fancy may suggest. If, however, I am anxious to catch a train, and can do so only by putting spurs to my beast, and by pressing him, somewhat beyond his accustomed pace, there is a sufficient motive to justify my conduct. But if I am travelling among some hostile tribe of savages, and I find myself so situated that escape will be impossible unless I use much greater violence, and so urge on my mettlesome steed that he does himself serious damage, and finally falls exhausted and dying by my camp fire, I am still guilty of no sin whatever. For I may most justly save my own life at the sacrifice of my horse's, even though its death be accompanied with the greatest agony.

Cardinal Newman, with his customary accuracy, states the relation between man and beast thus:—

“You know *we have no duties towards the brute creation*; there is no relation of justice between them and us. Of course, we are bound not to treat them ill, for cruelty is an offence against that holy law which our Maker has written on our hearts, and it is displeasing to Him. But they can claim nothing at our hand; into our hands they are *absolutely* delivered. We may use them, we may destroy them at our pleasure, not our wanton pleasure, but still for our own ends, for our own

benefit and satisfaction, *provided that we can give a rational account of what we do.*"<sup>1</sup>

Such is the clear exposition of the doctrine by, perhaps, the profoundest and greatest thinker of the present century. But here some may be inclined to ask: Is man then allowed to abuse and maltreat the dumb beasts *just as he pleases*? Does this doctrine afford him license to inflict the most hideous torture for any purpose, however trivial and insignificant? Most certainly not. And this brings us face to face with another important principle—a principle which corrects and controls and moderates the first, and keeps it within due bounds. This second principle is that "Man, being a rational creature, must act in a rational manner". God alone is the absolute Master and Lord of the irrational creation, and though He has given man dominion over every living thing, He requires that this dominion should be exercised in accordance with the rational nature which man possesses, and which should hold all his lower and animal appetites in subjection. Man has no right to act in an arbitrary and irresponsible way towards any creature whatsoever, not even towards himself. "You are not your own" (1 Cor. vi. 19). Hence the authority over the beasts, communicated to him by God, though a very real authority, must

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Omnipotence in Bonds*, sermon preached before the Catholic University of Dublin.



be exercised in a reasonable manner. Reason, not passion, not cruelty, not lust, must guide his actions and superintend his conduct. Hence St. Thomas teaches: "Ratio est primum principium omnium actuum humanorum, et omnia alia principia eorum obediunt rationi, sed diversimode".<sup>1</sup>

Who orders his life and action according to sound reason, acts justly, uprightly, and in a virtuous manner, as all theologians agree.<sup>2</sup>

Hence it follows that before utilising the beasts in any way that may cause them pain, reason must be consulted. Reason must assign the conditions and the degree of pain permissible under different circumstances. Now reason demands three conditions. Firstly, that there be a *motive*; secondly, that there be a *just* motive; and thirdly, that there be some *proportion* between the end to be gained and the means employed in reaching that end, thus *e.g.*, in the matter of vivisection, the amount of suffering inflicted must bear some relation to the result to be obtained.

<sup>1</sup> Consult I. 2, q. 58, 2. o.; et q. 90, 2 c.; et 100, 1 c.; et q. 102, 1 ad 3.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, to select one among many, the Theologia Wirceburgensis, lays down the following proposition:—

"Quicumque deliberate agit, vel cognoscit id, quod hic et nunc facit, esse rectæ rationi conforme, et sic elicit actum *moraliter bonum*: vel cognoscit esse rectæ rationi difforme, et sic elicit actum *moraliter malum*: vel cognoscit, illud nec esse positive conforme vel difforme, *i.e.*, nec sibi esse præceptum, nec prohibitum, sed permissum; et tunc agens *debet ulterius habere finem* extrinsecum, si ergo pro fine habeat honestum, actus erit bonus," etc. (*De Actibus Humanis*, cap. iii., artic. 2).

If important results are obtained by certain experiments on rabbits, cats, dogs and other beasts, then such experiments are certainly not, in themselves, contrary to the law of God. Such experiments should, of course, be conducted with all the gentleness and humanity that is possible; anæsthetics should be used where they are applicable, and no useless or unnecessary pain is to be tolerated. But under such conditions vivisection has always been, and is, tolerated by the Church.

We must here point out that it is no part of the Church's duty to decide whether the practice of vivisection is necessary for the advance of medicine or not. She is not called upon to decide the medical disputes of medical men. How far vivisection has aided and helped on medical science; how far it has enabled doctors and physicians to diminish the sufferings and agonies of thousands of human beings, and to reduce the violence of disease and the paroxysms of fever all over the world, are extremely interesting questions, but questions wholly and entirely outside the province of theology as such. These are questions, not of morality, but of fact; they concern past and contemporary history, not the sacred science. We may frankly admit that they are vexed questions, and may be strongly debated. Though we are bound to confess that the

overwhelming weight of evidence is in favour of the vivisectionists.

Some men declare that vivisection is utterly useless, and calculated to do more harm than good. But the great and leading physicians, men of the highest position and authority in their own profession (in spite of the obloquy to which the declaration exposes them), are most clear and decisive in asserting its immense use and advantages. In a letter to the *London Times*, for instance, signed by some of the most eminent doctors, occurs the following declaration:—

*“It is hardly possible for us to name any progress of importance in medicine, surgery or midwifery, which has not been due to or promoted by this method of inquiry.”*

“(Sir) ANDREW CLARK.

“(Sir) JAMES PAGET.

“(Dr.) SAMUEL WILKS.

“(Sir) GEORGE HUMPHERY.”

Or take the resolution unanimously passed in the General Assembly of the International Medical Congress in London, in 1881, under the presidency of Sir James Paget, when the leaders of the profession in this and all civilised countries were assembled. The resolution runs as follows:—

“This congress records its conviction that experiments on living animals have proved of the

*utmost service to medicine in the past, and are indispensable to its future progress.* Accordingly, while strongly deprecating the infliction of unnecessary pain, it is of opinion, alike *in the interests of man and of animals*, that it is not desirable to restrict competent persons in the performance of such experiments."

Again, H. Taine assures us that, "les vivisections ont créé presque toute la physiologie du système nerveux". "Sans cela (*i. e.*, vivisection) il n'y a ni physiologie ni vraie médecine possibles." And another authority says: "Renoncer aux vivisections serait condamner la physiologie à un éternel *statu quo*". These are but specimens of the judgments of great authorities. We might fill a volume with others in the same sense.

Although the evidence in favour of the immense utility of vivisection seems to us simply overwhelming, yet, as has been already observed, this is not a point about which the Church is concerned in the slightest degree. So far as her position goes it may or may not be useful. The part of the theologian is to define and to declare what is, and what is not, lawful, *under each hypothesis*. As to which hypothesis is the right one, and which the wrong, it is not her place to decide. To expect her to settle such matters of pure fact is like expecting her to declare, not only that one man may not poison another, but to determine also

what drugs are, and what are not, poisonous. If little or no good comes of it, it is, of course, wrong;<sup>1</sup> for to inflict pain for no purpose, or for a wholly inadequate purpose, is sheer cruelty,<sup>2</sup> *and sheer cruelty is always wrong*. If, however, very substantial good does come of it; if, as the great physician, the late Sir Andrew Clark, writes, "it is hardly possible to name *any* progress of importance in medicine, surgery or midwifery which has not been due to or promoted by vivisection," then, indeed, it is perfectly lawful, and may be practiced with a safe conscience, so long as the conditions are observed, which have been pointed out above, and so long as no needless suffering is intentionally inflicted.

Some of the opinions expressed upon this subject are not only very singular, but also very silly. Thus men who freely indulge in such pastimes as hunting, shooting, hawking and fishing, without the smallest qualms of conscience, are (or pretend to be) horror-stricken at the very idea of vivisection; though, if there be any choice in the matter, it must surely be in favour of science over sport.

<sup>1</sup> It is apparently on this ground that Cardinal Manning disapproved of the practice. On the purely *theological* aspect of the question there is no difference whatever between him and ourselves; for did we take his view of the facts we should also discountenance it. But the expert and professional evidence is far too strong to be set aside.

<sup>2</sup> Lessius writes: "Abstinendum a crudelitate ne *sine causa* doloribus conficiantur" (*De Justitia*, etc., I. 2, c. ix., Dub. 1.).



Many have no scruple in running down a hare and harassing it with hounds, until, after an hour or more, perhaps, the poor panting creature, trembling in every limb, and almost beside itself with terror, yields itself at last to the mercy of the dogs. In this case they allow an unfortunate beast to be tortured for hours by gentlemen and ladies in scarlet, merely for sport and idle pastime, which can lead to no practical result, while they turn up the whites of their eyes in virtuous indignation because the same animal is called upon to suffer—though it may be not half as long nor half as severely—for the sake of some really important and scientific end, perhaps even the saving of many human lives. It is difficult, indeed, to understand the intellectual condition of such men; or to explain how they can logically maintain that it is right for a fisherman to torture an animal with a fish-hook while angling, but quite wrong for a doctor to probe it with a dissecting-knife while studying. To us, at least, to be cut with a sharp scalpel by the skilful hands of a conscientious physician for some really valuable end would be far preferable to having a nasty steel hook fast locked in the extremity of one's throat, and being tugged and tugged about by a man pulling away at the other end by a string, which he now loosens, and now tightens, according as the struggles grow more or less intense. Especially when one remem-

bers that after some hours of this treatment one must expect to be hauled in, utterly exhausted and worn out, to die panting and gasping on the bank.

Or, again, it is absurd to say that it is *just* to vivisect a horse with whip and spur, and to goad it on until it drops in an agony of exhaustion, on the mere chance of thereby bringing succour to a drowning man—which no reasonable person would deny—and yet to declare, in the same breath, that it is *unjust* to vivisect a rat or a rabbit, even though the result were to prolong the lives of thousands of our fellow-creatures. In a word, to condemn vivisection when *properly* performed by competent and humane men (which is the only form of vivisection we are contemplating), is hopelessly illogical, unless all sport and pain-giving pastimes be condemned likewise. If one is wrong, the other is much more so; if the former is to be condemned, so must the latter, and far more strongly, and far more vehemently, since the latter has not even the important results that are claimed, and claimed with much show of reason, for the first.

“Which (a writer in the *British Medical Journal* asks very pertinently) is the greater cruelty: to infect a herd of mice, to imprison thousands of rabbits for long hours with broken limbs in steel-jawed gins, to geld a herd of horses or of sheep,

or to perform a physiological experiment in the laboratory *after giving proof that the object is one important to knowledge, and likely to benefit mankind?* Nay, the pain and suffering inflicted in any one country in this way is probably greater in a day than that inflicted in the whole physiological laboratories of Great Britain in a year. Moreover, in the one case anæsthetics are never administered; in the other, they are so in most cases, and if they are not so administered, a special declaration and a special license is required."

If we must not vivisect, then to be logical and consistent, neither must we poison mice, nor entrap rats, nor geld cattle, nor perform any other action which involves suffering to bird or beast—which is a perfectly legitimate *reductio ad absurdum*. Q. E. D. Perhaps it will help us to realise the whole bearing of the question more clearly if we state some among the common objections we have actually heard raised against the ordinary teaching of theology.

Objection No. 1. If scientific discovery and the advance of medical knowledge can justify the infliction of pain on irrational animals, the same motives should justify the infliction of pain upon human beings. Even far more so, since the human subject provides a far more perfect object-lesson. Why not, therefore, vivisect our criminals instead of the inoffensive and sinless beasts?

Answer. There is no parallel. The beasts have been created for the use and benefit of man; but there is no evidence to show that one set of men has been created for the use and benefit of another set, in the sense in which these words are applied to beasts: nor can it be proved that God has given one set of men that dominion over any other set of men, which He has undoubtedly given to all men over the beasts of the field. Besides, if, because you may vivisect a rabbit, you are therefore justified in vivisecting a man, then it would also follow that, because you may kill a rabbit for food, you are also justified in killing a man for food, which is absurd. Man, with his immortal soul, his eternal destiny, his supernatural state, his relationship with the God-Man, etc., stands on a totally different platform. No Christian or believer can fail to see the measureless chasm that divides man from the beast.

Objection No. 2. To cut, or experiment upon living and sensitive animals, is cruel. Cruelty is a sin. And no advantage or gain, or advance in medical knowledge or surgical skill, can justify the commission of sin. Evil cannot be done that good may come of it. Therefore nothing can justify the painful experiments made upon living animals.

Answer. Now this very childish and utterly fallacious argument has been urged again and

again, and is constantly cropping up in the papers, to the no small amusement of the intelligent reader. The answer is plain enough. The kind but simple soul that urges the objection is unconsciously begging the whole question. That "cruelty" is a sin we most readily admit. Nay, more: we affirm, without any "if" or "but," that "cruelty" is always wrong, and because always wrong, nothing can ever justify it; no conditions nor circumstances can make cruelty—while it really is cruelty—right or allowable. And this cannot be otherwise, because "cruelty" is "*malum in se*," *i. e.*, evil in itself, and by its very nature. Where, however, the objector runs off the straight lines of reason, is where he attaches an altogether false meaning to the word. What is cruelty? Is the mere infliction of pain "cruelty"? No. Otherwise the force of gravity is cruel when it drags down the avalanche and smothers a village beneath a mountain of ice and snow; and the wind is cruel when it drives the battered barque against the precipitous cliff, and wrecks crew and passengers without remorse. Is it even "cruelty" (*a*) to inflict pain and great pain, (*b*) on a perfectly innocent person; and to do so (*c*) knowingly and deliberately? No. Not necessarily; otherwise the dentist and surgeon, especially in the days before the discovery of anæsthetics, must



be regarded as veritable demons of cruelty—instead of ministers of mercy.

Suffer us to explain. Some actions are “in themselves” *indifferent*, and some actions are, “in themselves” *evil*. We call an act *indifferent in se*, or, *in itself*, which may be sinful or not sinful, which may now be good and now be bad, according to the intention and to the circumstances. On the other hand, we call an act *evil in itself*, which is, and remains evil, under every circumstance and despite the end in view. As an example of the first, take the putting of a man to death. Is that a good or a bad action? It may be either. It depends upon circumstances. If we are dealing with an innocent and an innocuous man, it is a great crime—a foul murder. If we are dealing with a guilty man, justly condemned by the rightful authority, then it is not a sin at all, but quite the reverse—an act of laudable justice. The physical act *in se* is indifferent, and takes its moral complexion from the various circumstances attending it, and the end in view. As an example of the second, take blasphemy. Blasphemy *qua* blasphemy is essentially evil. Its sinfulness does not arise from the circumstances attending it. It is evil *in* its very nature. Hence, though circumstances may arise which would justify our putting a man to death, no possible circumstances could

ever arise, under any hypothesis, to justify our giving way to blasphemy.

Now it is abundantly clear that the physical act, by which we inflict pain, whether on man or beast, is something which in this theological sense is in itself wholly indifferent. This is only another way of saying, that under one set of circumstances it may be wrong, and under another set of circumstances it may be right. It lends itself to either possibility. The mere mechanical act of cutting off a child's arm or leg is *in itself* neither a good nor a bad action: it is an indifferent one. In fact, we have no business whatever to condemn the act till we have all the circumstances clearly and fairly before us. If it be done for the mere pleasure of causing pain, or indulging a cruel disposition—well, it is, of course, a horrible crime. If it be done by some skilled physician simply because he knows that to save the child's life it is absolutely necessary to amputate the diseased member, it is, indeed, identically the same act, but, so far from being a "horrible crime," it has become an act of mercy and of loving kindness. Hence those who are in such a violent hurry to condemn the vivisectionists are allowing their zeal to run away with their reason, and may well be counselled to allay their skipping spirits with some cold drops of modesty.

Hence, if we are asked: Is it allowable to cut

off a dog's leg? Is it allowable to subject a rabbit to special conditions of atmospheric pressure, temperature and food? Is it allowable to inoculate a guinea-pig with the germs of certain diseases? and so forth—the only answer we can make is, that we cannot decide till we know the circumstances. All these material actions are, *in themselves, absolutely indifferent*, in the theological sense. As in the case of the decapitation of a human being—the lawfulness or unlawfulness depends upon circumstances. If they are done in a spirit of cruelty; or for a wholly inadequate motive; or on some merely frivolous pretext, they are, of course, unlawful; but if they are done by competent and humane hands, under proper and reasonable restrictions, and for the express purpose of benefiting mankind, and administering to man's pressing needs in sickness, disease and death, then such acts are lawful and good, and to be even commended and approved. Indeed, these skilled physicians are but exercising the dominion over the beasts that God has granted them; and enabling the irrational creatures to fulfil the end of their creation the more completely, in thus serving the interests and needs of the great human family. “*Creaturis irrationalibus bonum vel malum dicitur contingere in ordine ad creaturam rationalem, propter quam sunt,*” says the Angel of the Schools.

For the sake of our weaker brethren, we may as well declare here, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that theologians permit no "cruelty" whatever under any circumstances. They undoubtedly sanction the infliction of pain. True. But only under circumstances in which, not merely in the language of the Schools, but in the language of all educated persons, it has altogether ceased to be cruelty. The famous *Century Dictionary* (as all other reliable lexicons) defines cruelty to be "an act inflicting severe pain, and done with *wilfulness* and *malice*". And we really cannot reconstruct the English (and, indeed, every other language also), and readjust the clear and obvious meaning of simple words to suit the fads and fancies of a few extreme anti-vivisectionists. These anti-vivisectionists, who seem to think that a tenderness towards beasts justifies the greatest rancour and intolerance towards their human opponents, will, doubtless, continue to dub all "vivisection" cruelty. Like other persons, when they dislike a thing, they are apt to invent bad names for it, and thereby confuse thought, blacken the fairest reputations, misrepresent sound doctrine, and throw dust into the eyes of simple folk. "Give a dog a bad name and hang him," is a proverb upon which they feel they may safely rely. But so far as calm reason and common sense are concerned they might just as well call a butcher a

“bloody murderer of the innocent,” or “an inhuman monster,” because he slays oxen and sheep; and a surgeon an “ogre of cruelty,” because he amputates limbs.

The following extreme case was proposed some little time ago. Dr. B. has a patient called X. who is dying of a certain disease. He is conscientiously convinced that if he could only discover certain information as to the use and effect of certain remedies he could save the life of X. But he also conscientiously believes (1) that he can arrive at that knowledge, but (2) only by means of experiments made in vivisection, with all the suffering necessarily involved therein. Ought Dr. B. to save the life of X., and by adding his discovery to medical science save the lives of countless numbers of others also, even though he should have to torture his dog for the purpose? To a theologian, of course, to state the case is to answer it. If pain upon a brute cannot be inflicted under such a condition, it can only be because the infliction of pain is an evil *in se*; but if an evil *in se*, then no pain whatever can ever be inflicted for any reason, which is absurd. *Ergo, etc.*

A worthy layman, whose acquaintance with theology seems to have been derived from his inner consciousness, hastened to answer this query in the pages of the *Tablet*. He first begged the whole question by denying that any such case was



possible. He then settled the case in that vigorous off-hand style so indicative of theological ignorance. In the first place, he called it a "truly pagan argument," whereas it is a most Christian one; he then went on to say that "even if the case were true, his answer from a moral standpoint would still be negative". He contended that those who answer "yes" would do so only in their anguish at losing a darling child, or some one else dear to them, etc. All that the admission proves, he argued, is—

"That in such a supreme hour the anguish of the parent would so outweigh all else that the Christian would practically become pagan for the nonce. In short, the natural would overpower the moral law. Thus the Tempter would only at most elicit a favourable answer from the supposed Christian by first making a pagan of him; that is, by subjecting him to such a painful alternative as would probably constrain him to follow the dictates of natural passion to the exclusion of all other considerations."

This is ingenious, but somewhat startling, as coming from one who will hunt the fox for hours for mere pastime, and who would probably feel little compunction should he, in shooting, "wing a bird," or wound a hare, and who would leave it to linger, perhaps for days, riddled with shot, and covered with wounds, with sinews torn and bones

broken, till death slowly releases it from its agony. That men are to be found who would poison thousands of rats and mice with strychnine, inflicting great agony, in order to save a little grain in their granaries, and who would yet be so very squeamish about making one beast suffer to save a "darling daughter's" life, is a fair instance of the readiness of some people to swallow the camel, while straining at the gnat. In the foregoing case, the only person that can be reproached with cruelty is the unnatural and inhuman parent who will stand by and calmly see his daughter's life ebbing away, and her frame agitated with pain, rather than allow a dog or a rabbit to suffer. Personally we would prefer a savage for a foster-parent to such a brutal and unnatural father.

If our Divine Lord were living visibly upon earth in these days, even He would scarcely escape prosecution at the hands of the anti-vivisectionists' society. Indeed, the indignation of its more enthusiastic members, were they, in this year of grace, 1899, to witness the scene narrated in St. Mark's Gospel, may be more easily imagined than described. "There was near the mountain a great herd of swine, feeding. And the (evil) spirits besought Jesus, saying: Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And Jesus immediately gave them leave." Thereby inoculating, as it were, the beasts—the

poor, dear little innocent piggies—with the devilish virus, in order save the possessed human beings. What was the consequence? Well, St. Mark continues: "And the herd of swine, with great violence, were carried headlong into the sea, being about two thousand, and they were stifled in the sea". Not altogether a painless death.

Sometimes the objections of the anti-vivisectionists take a somewhat different form. A most horrible and wholly fanciful picture of a physician, or rather a demon in human shape, is drawn in glowing colours, and represented as inflicting unheard-of cruelties<sup>1</sup> upon some unfortunate beast for no adequate purpose; and then we are asked defiantly, Is vivisection lawful? They represent a series of the most exquisitely agonising experiments upon a dog or a monkey, which make one's

<sup>1</sup> "I am satisfied [writes Sir James Crichton Browne] that the pain caused by the floggings administered to the school children in London *on any one day*—experiments on vertebrate, warm-blooded, living animals, under the license of the School Board, and with very problematical advantages—is *vastly greater* than that arising from *all the vivisections* performed in *all the laboratories* of the United Kingdom *in the course of a year.*' That statement, from one of the leading medical authorities, will surely silence the cry about cruelty. It might be well to remember, too, for the sake of consistency, that rabbits are trapped, and allowed to break their limbs and torture themselves for a whole night, and that the suffering thus inflicted is a hundred times greater than can possibly occur under the present system of vivisection. It is well to look facts fairly in the face, especially in the domain of science."—*Ludgate Monthly*, May, 1894.

flesh creep even to read, performed for some wholly trivial and insufficient motive, and think to snatch from us an answer in contradiction to our principles. Of course, we condemn, in common with all theologians, such abominable abuses;<sup>1</sup> but “*abusus non tollit usum*”. To experiment in the manner described above is to use irrational creatures, not according to reason, but in direct violation of the clearest dictates of reason, and in glaring contradiction to the canon already laid down, which demands a proportion between the end to be obtained, on the one hand, and the means to be employed, on the other. Such cases, whether true or false, possess no weight whatever against the lawfulness of vivisection, and it is foolish to present them as arguments; they prove only that, like many other practices, vivisection may be abused, as well as used. The Church denounces the *abuse*; she sanctions the *use*. Is it sinful to take a glass of wine because many a man gets beastly drunk? Will a highly coloured picture of the fighting and quarrelling, the cursing and swearing, the debauchery and impurity, the squandered fortunes, the desolated homes, the impoverished families, the bloodshed and murder,

<sup>1</sup> “Patet primo, posse in hac re esse peccatum, saltem veniale; est enim abusus quidam potestatis herilis, et dominii. Secundo, quanta sit suavitas divini spiritus, etiam in creaturas ratione carentes.”—Lessius, *De Justitia*, I, 2, c. ix., Dub. I.

and much else traceable to excessive drinking, ever make it a sin *in se* to swallow a glass of whisky, or to empty a tankard of beer? If not, then neither can the practice of vivisection become wrong in itself, because there are men who are cruel and heartless—aye, men who, under pretext of good, do harm. As well say that it is sinful to read the Scriptures, because hundreds of false sects abuse the practice by wresting the texts in support of their damnable heresies.

To approve of vivisection as something lawful in itself, when properly conducted, *juxta modum*, and for a good, useful and humane end, is not to approve of the excesses and cruelties sometimes—perhaps often—perpetrated in its name.

Unfortunately there are a certain class of persons who confound reason, violate logic, and obliterate the clearest guiding principles in one long, incoherent and wild scream of horror at the violation of the supposed rights (?) of animals. They mix up sentiment with sense, imagination with fact, and so mingle the false with the true, and the sublime with the ridiculous, in one long tirade of indignant scorn and invective, that after reading such effusions one is left marvelling how so much strength of feeling can coexist with so little common sense. We Catholics may well rejoice that we are safeguarded from all narrowness, and protected from both extremes by the clear theology



of the Church, which determines the position we are to hold with the greatest neatness and precision.<sup>1</sup> Sympathy with every form of suffering is, of course, most admirable; but where are we to stop if we take sympathy as our sole and guiding star? Why, indeed, should sympathy, which begins by forbidding every form of vivisection, however carefully carried out, not go on to condemn all slaying of animals, even for food; all breaking-in of horses, even for riding or driving; all chaining up of dogs, even for defence of house or property? It is a question of mere degree. Though sympathy has an excellent work to do, it is not everything, and other considerations must also be allowed to exercise their due weight. As Carlyle so well observes: "It is grievous to think that this noble omnipotence of sympathy has been so rarely the Aaron's rod of truth and virtue, and so often the enchanter's rod of wickedness and folly. No solitary miscreant, scarcely any solitary maniac,

<sup>1</sup> A certain Mr. H. Salt, criticising the above remark, writes: "The results of this 'precision,' in regard to vivisection, as shown in the absolutely conflicting positions attained by Cardinal Manning and the more democratic Catholics on the one hand, and by the Vaughan-cum-Rickaby school of reactionists on the other, are decidedly entertaining".—We feel far too kindly towards Mr. Salt to begrudge him the "entertainment" that his ignorance of Catholic theology seems to have procured him. Indeed we wish him joy of it. At the same time we may observe that, had he known anything of the Sacred Science, he would have discovered that the so-called "conflicting positions" exist only in his own too fertile imagination. Still, "where ignorance is bliss, it were folly to be wise". Let him consult pp. 408-12, and the note on p. 382.

would venture on such actions and imaginations as large communities of sane men have, in such circumstances, entertained as sound wisdom."

England seems specially subject to mental epidemics. A craze is started. A certain number are taken with it—some very badly. The temperature rises to fever heat. Delirium follows, and the symptoms become alarming. The intellectual fever or distemper that happens to be in possession at the present hour is anti-vivisectionism. Some form of this distemper is of pretty regular occurrence. It may be reckoned on at intervals like other natural visitations. Indeed there must be some scores of persons in this country now passing through an acute stage of the anti-vivisection craze. What are we to do? To borrow Carlyle's words: "We must deal with it as the Londoners do with their fogs—go cautiously out into the groping crowd, and patiently carry lanterns at noon; knowing, by a well-grounded faith, that the sun is still in existence, and will one day reappear."

NOTE.

The following interesting and apposite letter by the Rev. John Gerard, S. J., was addressed to *The Spectator*, but (like other letters enforcing the same doctrine, copies of which afterwards came into my hands), it was, for too obvious reasons, not allowed to appear.

“THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS.

“SIR,

“Many excellent persons are grievously shocked by the doctrine that animals possess no ‘rights’. May I be allowed to offer a few considerations in support of a view which appears to be so completely misunderstood?

“In the first place, how can creatures be said to possess ‘rights,’ which, without injustice, we may deprive of their lives and of all that makes life worth living? But we slaughter animals without scruple, for the sake of their flesh, their skins or their ivory. Some we painfully render incapable of reproducing their kind, that they may be more docile in our hands. Others we rob of their newborn offspring that we may enjoy more delicate meats. Horses are made to spend their lives at the bottom of coal-pits to draw out trucks:

When we have got out of them all the work we can, we use them to feed our hounds. Puppies and kittens are drowned if we consider them superfluous. Pheasants are bred only that they may be shot, and foxes preserved to be hunted. If these creatures have rights of any sort, they must be outrageously violated by such treatment.

“Moreover, for the sake of a small benefit to ourselves, we do not hesitate to add torture to death; yet, if the ‘conscience of mankind’ is to be our test, it may be questioned whether a majority of healthy-minded men refuse to eat lobsters and crabs because they have been boiled alive, or *pâté de foie gras* because the geese producing it have been doomed to life-long indigestion.

“But, again, if any animals possess rights, all must do so: tigers, puff-adders, sharks and tape-worms, as much as dogs, cats, rabbits and canary birds. Yet what ‘rights’ do we allow to rats and mice, bugs and fleas, tsetse flies and ‘black beetles’. It has recently been suggested that a test should be exacted of all seeking public office, who should be required to declare themselves sound on the rights of ‘the higher animals’. But what animals are ‘higher’ except such as it suits us so to designate? In the matter of intelligence a rat could give many points to a lap-dog, and fleas are considerably more capable of education than guinea-pigs. If we arbitrarily assign

rights to some and not to others, is it not we ourselves whom we recognize as the source and origin of those rights.

“If this be so, it is hard to understand what the term ‘animal rights’ may signify. But does it follow that those who deny their existence must therefore advocate or approve wanton cruelty? For my own part, I hold this utterly abominable, and from personal knowledge I know that men who, because of the doctrine they teach, have recently been stigmatised as heartless and unfeeling, would not hurt a fly, and would use all their influence to inculcate humanity upon others. For it is not only the violation of others’ rights that we should avoid: we have duties also to ourselves, and are bound to avoid everything degrading to our nature. A boy outrages no one’s rights when he wallows in a mud-puddle; yet what parent or master would be unconcerned to see him do so? A grown man riding a cock-horse upon a long reed would be a disgusting spectacle. There are people who are not edified to behold the worship of a poodle. The owner of a museum or library has, I suppose, a strict ‘right’ to destroy his own pictures, statues or books; yet our instincts would certainly be revolted were he to exercise such rights. If this be so when the works of man are concerned, far more with those of God. These are, indeed, given for our use and benefit, and so



far as that purpose is concerned we have full dominion, but when with no advantage in view we wantonly misuse them, we debase our own nature by misuse of every means which were intended to help towards its elevation; and it is because of this self-degradation that cruelty on the part of man is so detestable.

“If this be not the explanation, how is it that similar cruelty on the part of animals towards one another does not revolt us? No one of them assuredly has any notion of the rights of any other, and our most cherished pets will inflict on creatures weaker than themselves tortures as grievous as were ever laid to the door of a vivisectionist, and without the slightest attempt to spare the sufferer any jot of pain. Not unfrequently they will devour their own young. How is it that no ‘rights’ are infringed in such cases, and that the perpetrators of such deeds are as inculpable in their performance as in the most winning artifices whereby they captivate our affection?

“When, ignoring the gulf between ourselves and them, we argue the case for the brute creation on the ground of ‘rights’ to be set against our own, it is inevitable that we should open the door to abuses of the gravest kind, and dull our sympathies in regard to our own brethren,<sup>1</sup> who,

<sup>1</sup> Let me remark that History itself affords many illustrations of the truth of Father Gerard’s words, thus:—

as a rule, claim our service on the score of duty alone, unaccompanied by pleasurable or æsthetic considerations. Instances are not far to seek. Is it not a fact that many who expend their sympathy upon cats and dogs have but little left for the poor; that they are not remarkable for kindness and consideration towards their dependents; that sometimes even their own children appear to hold a lower place in their hearts than do their pets? In extreme instances such sentiments are openly professed; thus, not very long ago, on occasion of a muzzling order, it was argued publicly in print that it would be a less evil for a few human beings to die of hydrophobia than for so many dogs to be made unhappy; and quite recently, in a letter which I have seen, a champion of animal rights has proudly declared that the beggars in our streets find it a more potent means of exciting the compassion of the charitable to have a dog or cat as their companion than a baby.

"JOHN GERARD, S. J."

"'In Egypt,' says Lecky, 'there are hospitals for superannuated cats, and the most loathsome insects are regarded with tenderness; but human life is treated as if it were of no account, and human suffering scarcely elicits a care. The same contrast appears more or less in all Eastern nations.' Again, some of the men most conspicuous for their activity during the Reign of Terror in France were very fond of pet animals. Couthon was strongly attached to a spaniel; Fournier lavished his love on a squirrel; Panis kept two gold pheasants; Chaumette had an aviary! and even the sanguinary Marat was devoted to doves" (*vide Evolutional Ethics*, etc., p. 145. By E. P. Evans, 1898).

The following is a copy of another letter sent to *The Spectator*, but not inserted.

“SIR,

“The Catholic Church condemns cruelty plainly enough, but, in accordance with Scripture, teaches that animals have no rights. Scripture is plain (Gen. i. 28 and ix. 2), and the Divinely ordered wholesale and continuous slaughtering of animals for sacrificial purposes and for food—nay, even sometimes merely for vengeance on owners—is utter confutation of any notion about ‘animal rights’. In the New Testament too, in the whole of our Lord’s teaching there is not one syllable about any supposed rights of animals. Indeed, as regards the particular question of vivisection, it is time to say that the *principle* of it is covered by such words of His as ‘*How much better, then, is a man than a sheep?*’ and ‘*Ye are of more value than many sparrows,*’ etc.

“For the Catholic Church then to condemn the using of animals in any way likely to be beneficial to the human race, would be to fly in the face of Scripture and to try and take away a liberty which God has given. . . .

“Yours, etc.,

“Anti-Cant.”

“The Rt. Rev. J. C. Hedley, O. S. B., Bishop of

Newport, asserts that animals have no rights, because they are not rational creatures, and do not exist for their own sake. 'The brute creation has only one purpose, and that is to administer to man, or to man's temporary abode.' This is the doctrine set forth more than six centuries ago by T. Aquinas, and recently expounded by Dr. L. Schutz, professor in the theological seminary at Trier, in an elaborate work entitled *The So-called Understanding of Animals, or Animal Instinct.*<sup>1</sup>

"The Jesuit, Victor Cathrein (*Stimmen aus Marien-Lach*, 7th Feb., 1895, p. 164), denies that man has any duties towards the lower animals" (p. 99, E. P. Evans).

The Rev. Joseph Rickaby, S. J., in his *Moral Philosophy*, teaches the same thing; remarking that "beasts, not having understanding, and therefore, not being persons, cannot have any rights". Indeed, it is in virtue of this that we are entitled to domineer over them, and use them as we do. "Noi dominiamo le bestie non solo per la superiorità della nostra natura," as the learned Mgr. Mario F. Peraldia writes, "ma perchè *le bestie non hanno diritti.*"

The Rev. Chas. Coppens, S. J., the learned Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the Creigh-

<sup>1</sup> *Evolutional Ethics*, etc., p. 96. By E. P. Evans, 1898. See also an Article on "The Lower Animals," in the *Catholic Dictionary* of W. E. Addis and T. Arnold, published in 1884.

ton Medical College, Omaha, and the writer of several well-known works, expresses himself as follows:—

“A physician can, with a safe conscience, use any brute animal that has not been appropriated by another man to experiment upon, whatever specious arguments humane societies may advance to the contrary. Brute animals are for the use of man, for his food and clothing, his mental and physical improvement, and even his reasonable recreations. Man can lawfully hunt and fish and practise his skill at the expense of the brute creation, notwithstanding the modern fad of sentimentalists. The teacher and the pupil can use vivisection for the sake of science, of mental improvement and intelligent observation. But is not this cruelty? and has a man a right to be cruel? No. No man has a right to be cruel; cruelty is a vice degrading to man’s noble nature. But vivisection practised for scientific purposes is not cruel. Cruelty implies the *wanton* infliction of pain.”

“The teaching of humane societies condemning all vivisection is due to the exaggeration of a good sentiment, and to *ignorance of first principles*. For they suppose that sufferings inflicted on brute animals are a violation of their rights. Now we maintain that brute animals have no rights in the true sense of the word.”



“Rights and duties suppose free beings, *i. e.*, persons: now an irrational animal is not a person; it is not a free being having a destiny to work out by its free acts; it is therefore incapable of having duties. Duties are matters of conscience; therefore they cannot belong to the brute animal; for it has no conscience. And since rights are given to creatures because of the duties incumbent on them, brute animals are incapable of having rights. When a brute animal has served man’s purpose, it has reached its destiny.”

“God said to Noe and his posterity: *‘Everything that moveth and liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herbs, have I delivered them to you’*. But He emphatically adds that the lives of men are not included in this grant; they are directly reserved for His own disposal. ‘At the hand of every man,’ He says, *‘will I require the life of man.’*”<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The only Catholic ecclesiastic of any weight that the anti-vivisectionists have been able to instance, as *apparently* siding with themselves, is the late Cardinal Manning. But his words, if duly considered, will be found, in simple truth, in no way out of harmony with the ordinary teaching of the Church.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Moral Principles and Medical Practice.* Benziger Bros., A.D. 1897, pp. 39-42.

On 25th June, 1881, speaking at the annual meeting of the Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection, the Cardinal used the words: "I take the first opportunity that has been offered me to renew publicly my firm determination, so long as life is granted me, to assist in putting an end to that which I believe to be a detestable practice, *without scientific result*, and immoral in itself".

In the above often quoted words, the Cardinal expresses his wish to put a stop to the practice of vivisection. But why? Because he does not consider it advantageous or useful; because, to use his own expression, he believes it to be "*without scientific result*". But here lies the very point upon which the whole question turns! Indeed, there are no theologians who would not condemn the practice as strongly as the Cardinal, if once they could join him in saying: "I believe it to be without scientific result". But on this purely medical aspect of the question, His Eminence cannot be regarded as an authority. He was neither a medical man, nor even a member of the College of Physicians: and we can hardly be blamed if, on that crucial point, we prefer the authority of such experts as Sir James Paget, Sir G. Humphry, Sir Andrew Clark, and the thousands of others, of almost equal eminence in the profession. Granting the Cardinal's assumption,

*viz.*, that vivisection is without result, we must all agree that it is "cruel," and condemn it as wrong and immoral, but we find it quite impossible, in face of the evidence, to deny its utility. And that makes just all the difference.

I knew the late Cardinal well. In fact it was my privilege to live in the same house, and I must say that whenever I spoke with him on the subject, the point on which he always laid stress was, the "utter uselessness" of experiments on living animals.

Again, we are repeatedly reminded that:—

On 21st June, 1882, speaking at the house of Lord Shaftesbury, he said: "There is not a religious instinct of nature, nor a religion of nature, nor is there a word in revelation either in the Old Testament or the New Testament, nor is there to be found in the great theology which I represent, no, nor in any Act of the Church of which I am a member, no, nor in the lives and utterances of any of those great servants of that Church who stand as examples, nor is there an authoritative utterance anywhere to be found in favour of vivisection".

We are most reluctant to criticise any statement coming from so great and so good a man as Cardinal Manning. Indeed, we have hitherto purposely abstained from all comment on the above passage lest we might seem to be wanting

in respect for one, for whom we have, in reality, the most sincere veneration.

Since, however, so much weight and importance are given to this passage by anti-vivisectionists, and since it is so persistently flaunted before our eyes, we feel that we are amply justified now in pointing out its utter inconclusiveness. In the meantime, the keen pleasure and smug satisfaction that it has afforded our opponents serve but to show how completely they are domineered by sentiment, and how little they are influenced by reason.

Any unprejudiced man, possessing the most elementary power of analysis, will perceive that the paragraph contains no shadow of proof or argument. The statements there made tell quite as strongly against the practice of tea-drinking or of tobacco-smoking as against the practice of vivisection. In fact they cannot condemn the one practice without, in the same breath, condemning the other two.

That the whole line of reasoning is hopelessly inconsequent, may be at once perceived by the simple expedient of substituting some recognised and *undeniably innocent* practice in place of the disputed practice of vivisection, say, for instance, that of wearing goloshes. Indeed, the unlawfulness of using goloshes might easily be proved in the actual words applied by the late Cardinal to

vivisection. Thus, one might declare, not only with great solemnity but with *absolute truth*, that there is no word to be found either in the Old or in the New Testament, nor is there a single sentence in the works of the great theologians, nor any authoritative utterance of Pope or Council that can be cited in favour of the practice of wearing goloshes, or of the practice of vivisection, or of the practice of using pocket-handkerchiefs. But what then? Well! we are just where we were. No conclusion follows, either for or against.

It is surely unreasonable to suppose that the Bible and the General Councils, and the great theologians must make specific mention of every practice or custom which is lawful! Had His Eminence been able to point to one single *condemnation* of the practice, there would be something to give thought pause; but if everything must be considered sinful and wrong which theologians do not expressly approve and commend by name, then it is wrong to skate or slide! which is absurd. Thus the whole argument falls to the ground.

Yet, it is on *such* arguments that the anti-vivisectionists rely.



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